

Style as choice

The Octagon portal of Trondheim Cathedral

Marianne Herman



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Institutt for filosofi, idé- og kunsthistorie og klassiske språk

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Preface

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Marianne Herman

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Introduction

The Octagon portal is the narrow, but lavishly decorated entrance to the Octagon of Trondheim Cathedral, the most sacred part of the cathedral in the Middle Ages and is generally thought to have been constructed sometime between 1180 and 1200.¹ The portal is often referred to as “the Bishop’s Entrance”. The portal has shown itself difficult to define stylistically and the dating of the portal continues to be debated.

My main object is to look at the Octagon portal in the perspective of *style as choice*, a theoretical perspective which examines the possibility of style being a result of conscious, active choices made at the time of the construction of the portal, rather than a decorative scheme which was applied to the portal automatically. Is it possible to use this theoretical perspective on the Octagon portal? Could this provide any more information about the patron and the artists behind the portal and what their intentions may have been –as well as more certain information about the dating?

Research history

The research history of the Octagon as a whole has been given a very detailed treatment in Kjartan Prøven Hauglid’s unpublished master thesis about the Octagon’s corbel heads.² I have therefore chosen to relate mainly the research history which concerns the Octagon portal directly.

The first mention of the Octagon portal can be found in Gerhard Schøning’s description of the ruins of the cathedral from 1762. Schøning gives a very detailed description of the portal in its then current state, but does not go into the question of dating as such and says nothing about the style of the various decorative elements. Here, the portal is referred to as “the entrance to the choir.”³

Professor P.A. Munch and architect H.E. Schirmer published a detailed work on Trondheim Cathedral in 1859, where the Octagon portal is briefly mentioned as “the outer

¹ See Introduction: *Research History* below.

² Kjartan M. Prøven Hauglid, ”Romanske konsollfriser og en tolkning av konsollfrisen på Nidarosdomens oktagon.” (Unpublished MA diss., University of Oslo, 2007), 8-14.

³ Gerhard Schøning, *Beskrivelse over den tilforn meget prægtige og vidtberømte Dom-Kirke i Throndhjem, Egentligen kaldet Christ-Kirken*, transcr. Øystein Ekroll, (Trondheim: Tapir, 2004), 77-7.

entrance” to the Octagon.⁴ Although Munch’s text does not treat the Octagon portal in detail, Schirmer’s drawings of the portal and of its capitals are extremely detailed. Munch dates the entire Octagon to 1311-1332, a theory which was shortly after refuted by N. Nicolaysen, who argued for the 1180’s as a more correct dating, based his observations of stylistic details.⁵ Nicolaysen published several articles about Trondheim cathedral in the 1850’s.

During the restoration of Trondheim cathedral in the years 1872-1906, architect C. Christie kept a detailed account of the restoration works. The Octagon facade and the Octagon portal along with it were restored during the period 1872-1876. Christie’s unpublished account is very informative, but as we shall see it does not mention *all* the elements of the Octagon portal and it does not go into style or dating.

In 1914, Johan Meyer describes the Octagon portal in his book about the cathedral in some detail and emphasizes the transitional style of the Octagon (interior and exterior), with many Southern French details in the lower parts and details from English Early Gothic in the clerestory and he gives the second half of the twelfth century as a likely date for the sculpture of the lower parts of the Octagon in general.⁶

In 1963, Brage Irgens Larsen dated the Octagon portal to the thirteenth century in his work about the Gothic sculpture of Trondheim Cathedral, generally basing this on “all profiles and details,” but the lower parts of the Octagon to the 1180’s.⁷

In his extensive monograph of Trondheim Cathedral from 1965, Gerhard Fischer gives a thorough description and partly also a stylistic evaluation of the Octagon portal. Fischer dates the portal to the 1180’s but suggests the possibility of a rearrangement of the portal’s arch at a slightly later date.⁸

The same year, Martin Blindheim briefly treated the Octagon and the portal in his work on Norwegian Romanesque decorative sculpture. He too dates the lower parts of the Octagon, including the Octagon portal, to 1183-1190.⁹

⁴ P.A. Munch and H.E. Schirmer, *Thronhjems Domkirke*, (Trondheim: Nidaros Domkirkes Restaureringsarbeiders Forlag, 2009), 88.

⁵ Munch, *Thronhjems Domkirke*, 57; Kjersti Kristoffersen, ”P.A. Munch og plansjeverket ”Thronhjems Domkirke”” i P.A. Munch, *Thronhjems Domkirke*, (Trondheim: Nidaros Domkirkes Restaureringsarbeiders Forlag, 2009), 139. Kristoffersen here refers to a critique by Nicolaysen of Munch’s work, published in *Illustreret Nyhedsblad* no. 50 1859, 215.

⁶ Johan Meyer, *Domkirken i Trondhjem*, (Trondheim: F. Brun’s Bokhandel, 1914), 67.

⁷ Brage Irgens Larsen, *De gotiske skulpturer i Trondheim Domkirke*, (Oslo: Dreyer’s Forlag, 1963), 39.

⁸ All the information in this paragraph is based on Gerhard Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim: Kirkebygget i middelalderen*, vol. 1-2, (Oslo: Land og Kirke, 1965), 140-145.

⁹ All the information in this paragraph is based on Martin Blindheim, *Norwegian Romanesque Decorative Sculpture 1090-1210*, (London: Alec Tiranti, 1965), 55-56.

Two decades later, in his section of *Art History of Norway*, Peter Anker argued that the sculpture of the Octagon and its portal must be seen as an example of the transitional style in sculpture all over Western Europe towards the end of the twelfth and beginning of the thirteenth century. Anker concludes that the sculpture of the Octagon's window course medallions cannot be earlier than 1200-1220, but that he is unsure of the dating of the lower parts of the Octagon as a whole, including the Octagon portal.¹⁰

In more recent years, Øystein Ekroll has dated the building of the Octagon's exterior to 1180-1210, and the interior to 1210-1220.¹¹ He has not treated the Octagon portal in particular. Margrete Syrstad Andås has treated the iconography of the Octagon portal's capitals in a recent article and argues that for a date around 1180 for the capital sculpture, whereas there may have been a rearrangement of the arch in the mid-thirteenth century.¹²

Finally, Christopher Norton argues in an unpublished manuscript that there may be a stylistic link between the capitals and shafts of the Octagon portal and Canterbury Cathedral via St. Mary's Abbey in York. Based on this, he dates the capitals to the 1170's-1180's, but does not say anything about the rest of the portal.¹³

As we can see, the interest over the years has mainly been focused on the capitals and their iconography and dating, while the rest of the portal has been more or less neglected. There have been suggestions of stylistic links to different geographical areas, but a thorough stylistic analysis of the elements of the Octagon portal has never before been done. For the majority of the aforementioned scholars, the dating of the capitals seems to centre round the 1180's, a dating which also coincides with the assumed period of construction of the lower parts of the Octagon. This dating therefore seems well founded. There is however also the possibility of a rebuilding of the portal at a later stage, suggested by Fischer and Andås, which I feel ought to be investigated further.

My intention is to try this tentative date for the portal's construction against the results of my attempt at dating of the portals' individual elements, based on stylistic analysis

¹⁰ All the information in this paragraph is based on Peter Anker, "Høymiddelalderens skulptur i stein og tre" in *Høymiddelalder og Hansatid*, vol. 2 of *Norges Kunsthistorie*, ed. Knut Berg et al, (Oslo, Gyldendal, 1981), 162-163.

¹¹ Øystein Ekroll, *Med kleber og kalk: Norsk steinbygging i mellomalderen*, (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 1997), 153.

¹² Margrete Syrstad Andås, "The Octagon Doorway: A Question of Purity and Danger?" in *Ornament and Order. Essays on Viking and Northern Medieval Art for Signe Horn Fuglesang*, ed. Margrethe C. Stang and Kristin B. Aavitsland, (Trondheim: Tapir, 2008), 98.

¹³ Christopher Norton and Stuart Harrison, "The Octagon", unpublished manuscript, 2008 (forthcoming), 65-66. I am very grateful to Erla B. Hohler for drawing this article to my attention and to Christopher Norton and Stuart Harrison for agreeing to let me refer to their unpublished work.

and viewed in the light of a broadly composed group of international comparative material. This will allow me to examine whether these results confirm the dating of the portal or challenge it. I believe this may provide some additional information about the dating of the rest of the portal and about the geographical origin of some of the portal's elements, which is one of the most unclear points in the portal's research history.

Methodological approach

My procedure for this study will be as follows: I will first give a short introduction to the concept of *style as choice* and its origin. I will then give a detailed description of the portal and its history, subsequently go into a detailed stylistic analysis of all the architectural elements of the Octagon portal in order to determine any stylistic influence and possibly also dating. Finally I plan to look at my results from the stylistic analysis in the perspective of the concept *style as choice*, to see if this can be applied successfully to a subject like the Octagon portal and whether this approach can provide additional information about the portal, its makers and dating.

For my stylistic analysis I have chosen certain criteria for each architectural element which will be accounted for at the beginning of each chapter. I have based my section on stylistic analysis on a number of international studies on the various architectural elements and their stylistic origin, as well as on my own observations of photographic material available in international databases such as www.Gotik-Romanik.de, www.bildindex.de (Bildarchiv Foto Marburg), www.art&architecture.org (The Courtauld Institute), <http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk> (Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland) and www.culture.gouv.fr (the French Ministry of Culture). The pre-restoration photographs and sketches from the Trondheim Cathedral Restoration Workshop (NDR) have also been of invaluable help. I have also been on numerous visits to Trondheim Cathedral in order to view the Octagon portal.

My section on the description and history of the Octagon portal (chapter 2), as well as the section on stylistic analysis (chapter 4- 10) are very detailed - something which has been necessary for the stylistic comparisons I wanted to make between the elements of the portal and my comparative material.

My theoretical perspective will be described in detail in part 1, chapter 1. My focus here is mainly on the work of Lena Liepe and Peter Draper. Chapter 3 about the method of stylistic analysis and the selection of diagnostic criteria is based on the work of Erla B.

Hohler. For chapter 9 on the profiled arch, I have relied heavily on the extensive work of Richard K. Morris on English moulding profiles for my stylistic comparisons, with the added help of getting the opportunity to discuss this with Stuart Harrison. For the rest of my stylistic analysis I refer to a number of Norwegian and international scholars throughout. Gerhard Fischer's monograph on Trondheim Cathedral remains the work I refer to the most throughout the study, mainly because of its detailed descriptions of every part of Trondheim cathedral. Many of the illustrations I refer to are from Fischer, but are not included here due to lack of space, so it may benefit the reader to keep a copy of Fischer by his or her side.

Disposition /organisation

This study is divided in four parts. Part 1, chapter 1, deals with the topic of stylistic analysis in general and the concept of *style as choice* in particular. Part 2, chapter 2 introduces the Octagon portal and gives a detailed description as well as a discussion of the placement in the façade, the materials, construction periods and restoration periods. Part 3 contains the entire stylistic analysis of the elements of the portal, starting with the method and criteria of stylistic analysis in chapter 3, then moving on to the various architectural elements of the portal in chapters 4-10. The possibility of rebuilding is treated in chapter 10. Part 4 takes up the *style as choice*-perspective again, with chapter 11 treating the circumstances around the building of the Octagon and its portal and chapter 12 looking at the Octagon portal in relation to these circumstances. Chapter 13 sums up and concludes the study.

Additional information

In this study I have chosen to use "Octagon portal" rather than "Bishop's entrance" for two reasons: There is no historical reason, as far as we know today, for calling the portal "the Bishop's Entrance" (which is the common name for it even today). This expression dates from the nineteenth century restoration.¹⁴ In addition, there is some confusion in the research literature concerning the cathedral, as Meyer, Fischer and Larsen refer to the portal as "the

¹⁴ Verbal information from Øystein Ekroll on our excursion on November 11th 2010. Also see Munch, *Domkirken i Throndhjem*, 64.

Bishop's Entrance" whereas P.A. Munch and Oluf Kolsrud by "the Bishop's Entrance" mean the Royal Entrance.¹⁵

I will often be referring to the *Early English* style in architecture. The definition of this is c.1180-1300. *Early Gothic*, however, refers to France in the period 1120-50 to 1200.¹⁶

My reason for choosing to write this thesis in English is for this material to become more accessible to non-Norwegian speaking scholars with an interest in Trondheim Cathedral - of which there are a few.

Part 1. Style as choice

1. Style as a result of choice

The Octagon portal of Trondheim cathedral is an unusual-looking portal. Some of its features have been described as late-Romanesque, some as Early Gothic, some features have been described as *possibly* from the sixteenth century and some features have been linked stylistically to areas as diverse as Southern England, Northern France, Southern France, Northern Spain and Sicily.¹⁷ Parts of the portal have been restored, both in medieval and modern times, some parts are damaged and some are intact and quite well preserved. How do we start to investigate the stylistic background for this portal?

The obvious path to take in an art historical investigation like this is stylistic analysis. Not only because this is one of the standard art historical tools, but also because, in this case, there is not much else to lean on. There are no contemporary written references and there are no other contemporary portals of the same character in the Trondheim area (nor in all of Norway). As we have seen, there is even disagreement on the dating of the Octagon

My starting point is the 1950-60's questioning of traditional stylistic analysis as a method and the more recent decades' interest in a new direction and possible solution to this question.

¹⁵ Oluf Kolsrud, *Olavskyrkja i Trondheim*, (Oslo: Norigs Ungdomslag og Student-Maallaget, 1914), 35, 39; Munch, *Domkirken i Throndhjem*, 64.

¹⁶ All the information in this paragraph is based on the article on Early Gothic art in Encyclopedia Britannica. <http://www.britannica.com/bps/search?query=Early+Gothic+art> s.v. "Early Gothic art" (accessed October 25th 2011).

¹⁷ See *Research History*

1.1 Art history and style

Since Vasari, art history and the concept of *style* along with it, has been thought of in terms of teleological periods – as a succession of progress, apogee and decline.¹⁸ By the mid-twentieth century this traditional approach was starting to run into problems and several art historians were questioning its validity.¹⁹ I would like to base my discussion here on James Ackerman's definition of style from 1963: Style is a distinguishable ensemble of traits that the art historian deducts from the work of art: "...certain characteristics in a work of art that are more or less stable, in the sense that they appear in other products of the same artist(s), era or locale, and flexible in the sense that they change according to a definable pattern when observed..."²⁰ So Ackerman's view was that in search for the concept of "style" we must look for traits that are consistent enough to be distinguishable, but also changeable enough to allow us to see a pattern or some familiarity when looking at other objects. He agrees with his predecessors in that the notion of "style" does provide a structure for art history. Style analysis as a method has a huge advantage in that it needs minimal documentation and can be used on the evidence of the work of art alone – but in Ackerman's view the most fruitful path is not to ask "What is style?" but rather "What definition of style provides the most useful structure for history of art?"

We use style as a means of establishing relationships between individual works of art. If we don't know the origin of the work of art, the process may be inverted to allow us to make hypotheses that certain works are from the same origin (time, place, person(s)) because they are of the same style. So style as a concept defines *relationships* and thus creates for us some kind of order. The artist will accept or alter certain features of the arts around him and places himself in relation to earlier art. In this sense "style" is a protection against chaos in the field of tension between the stability of old art and the change of new art.²¹

Ackerman asks us to visualize style as a great canvas which generations of artists have painted on. Some of what was painted was kept, some rubbed out, some more was added - and the end result cannot be said to be the aim of the earlier artists nor the solution

¹⁸ Jean Wirth, *La Datation de la Sculpture Médiévale*, (Genève: Droz, 2004), 108. Wirth here refers to Hans Belting, *The End of the History of Art?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

¹⁹ The main three art historians who defined style in a new way in this period are Meyer Schapiro, Ernst H. Gombrich and James Ackerman. See Meyer Schapiro, "Style," *Anthropology Today*, ed. Alfred Louis Kroeber, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953, pp 287-312 ; Ernst Gombrich, "Style" in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, vol 15 (1972), pp 352-361.

²⁰ James Ackerman, "Style," in *Art and Archaeology*, eds. James Ackerman and Rhys Carpenter, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1963), 164.

the problems posed by them. The pattern of style change then seems to be determined by a succession of complex decisions along the way and the motivation is a constant probing into the unknown – not steps towards the perfect solution.²²

From the 1970's onward, stylistic analysis as a method became more neglected in the favour of new strains of thought in art history, often influenced by other subjects such as psychology, literature and history: Iconology, feminism, Marxism and semiotics.²³ There seems to be a general agreement that style analysis is an important tool in art history, but there has also been some concern about its future. For the last few decades style analysis seems to have received less attention than ever and it is clear that there are many problems attached to its use.²⁴

1.2 The theoretical background for *style as choice*

I have chosen to focus on one relevant problem in the use of stylistic analysis and medieval decorative architecture, based on Lena Liepe's article "Om stil och betydelse i Romansk stensulptur" ("*Style and meaning in Romanesque stone sculpture*").²⁵ If stylistic analysis is based on the evolution of style in a straight line, what happens in cases where the object of investigation does not fit the stylistic categories? This is absolutely relevant for the Octagon portal too. Which tools do we have if stylistic analysis fails? And, if used in a less traditional way, can stylistic analysis provide us with new and different information?

Michael Baxandall has written about "intention" as a part of his discussion of the circumstances around the creation of works of art and described it as "a general condition of rational human action....Intention is the forward-leaning look of things...A relation between the object and its circumstances."²⁶ Liepe takes this further in her article bases her argument partly on Baxandall's notion of "situated intention" and partly on Ackerman's view of style

²¹ All the information in this section is from Ackerman, "Style," 164-166.

²² Ackerman, "Style," 175.

²³ Kristin Blikrud Aavitsland, "En blandet fornøyelse: Stilbegrepet i dagens kunsthistoriske praksis," *Konsthistorisk Tidsskrift* 74/1, (2005): 3 ; Gøran Hermerén, "Stilbegreppens logik," *Vitterhetsakademiens Symposium 16-18.november 1982*, Konferenser 9, (Kungliga Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, Stockholm.1982), 216.

²⁴ Hermerén, "Stilbegreppens logik," 187, 192; Aavitsland, "En blandet fornøyelse", 8. Aavitsland offers a possible solution to the problem of stalemate in stylistic analysis: Pragmatism combined with "historical stylistics". What she is referring to is Thomas Crow's notion of "historical stylistics" in his article from 1994 where he rejects the evolutionism of traditional style analysis, but suggest we keep the methodical approach to the work of art whilst relating it to the circumstances around its creation. In my opinion this comes quite close to the view of Liepe and Draper. See Thomas Crow, "Observations on style and history in French painting of the Male Nude 1785-1794," *Visual Culture*, eds. Bryson, Holly and Moxey, (Hanover, N.H.: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 161.

²⁵ Lena Liepe, "Om stil och betydelse i romansk stensulptur," *Romanske Stenarbejder* 5, (Højberg: Hikuin, 2003), 161-176

as a tool made up by traits defined and abstracted from the work of art by the spectator. This is combined with the idea that the word “style” is something that works in connection with a set of differences and similarities. She chooses to see form as something that has come into being as a result of choice, motivated by specific preconditions both on an individual level and in a larger cultural and social context – *style as a result of choice*.²⁷

The question of choice does of course draw the attention to the questions of whose choice was it to make and what evidence do we have to shed some light on the roles of the patrons and the craftsmen in this process?²⁸ Peter Draper suggests that we try to disentangle ourselves from the conventional specializations of (in this case) architectural history and “understand the monument as a whole in its historical context, seeking an interpretation which is related closely to concepts and modes of thought current at the time of its conception.”²⁹ This is in line with Liepe’s points of view regarding the context in which the work of art was created. Draper stresses the significance of evidence that can be derived directly from the monument, but also the importance of methodology of interpretation and the ways in which the enquiry is focused.³⁰ Instead of using the term “style” he prefers to discuss “the character of the building” and would like to investigate which aspects of the design, or which architectural features, would be most relevant to contemporaries when it comes to establishing the essential character of the building.³¹ He prefers to leave behind the word “style” in this context and prefers to speak of a “sense of decorum” at the time of construction, a sense of what was suitable and fitting in different contexts.³² The various names of styles that modern art historians operate with would make no sense to the creators of the monuments we are studying. Focusing on the sense of decorum could prove more fruitful. This would vary from one monument to another and this approach could explain the seemingly confusing differences in style in two contemporary monuments.³³ Change in style can of course reflect a chronological sequence, but we should be willing to consider that

²⁶ Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 41-42.

²⁷ Liepe, “*Om stil och betydelse i romansk stensulptur*,” 165. Liepe here refers to an article by Margaret Conkey: “Experimenting with style in archaeology: Some historical and theoretical issues”, in *The Uses of Style in Archaeology*, eds. M. Conkey and C.A. Hastorf, 5-17, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

²⁸ Peter Draper, “Interpreting the Architecture of Wells Cathedral”, in *Artistic Integration in Gothic Buildings*, eds. Virginia Chieffo Raguin, Kathryn Brush, Peter Draper, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press Inc., 1995), 115.

²⁹ Draper, “Interpreting the Architecture of Wells Cathedral,” 116.

³⁰ Draper, “Interpreting the Architecture of Wells Cathedral,” 116.

³¹ Draper, “Interpreting the Architecture of Wells Cathedral,” 118.

³² Draper, “Interpreting the Architecture of Wells Cathedral,” 127.

³³ Draper, “Interpreting the Architecture of Wells Cathedral,” 126.

certain architectural forms could have had connotations and typological associations and that a certain diversity of forms might be intentional.³⁴

How do we investigate which aspects of a building or a work of art were most relevant to its contemporaries when it comes to establishing the character of the building? This is the potentially weak point of this theoretical model. Draper agrees that it is impossible to attempt to reconstruct the process of creation or even distinguish the contribution of patron or mason, but he thinks it is possible to look at the historical context of a commission in order to “identify the factors that might have influenced the choice of specific features in order to create a particular of overall effect...The primary concern of the patrons would have been that the selection of the architectural vocabulary should be appropriate to the building and that it should be employed in a manner which matched their aspirations”³⁵

This is what I intend to base my investigation on when it comes to the Octagon portal. Is it possible to look at the portal’s combination of architectural elements and not be distracted by some of the seemingly contradictory stylistic influences, but rather see the whole of the portal as an intended result of active and conscious choices?

Part 2. The Octagon Portal

2. Description, materials, construction periods and restoration

2.1 Description of the portal

The Octagon portal is the only entrance to Trondheim cathedral’s octagon and it is situated on the south-east side of the Octagon (Fig.1 and 2), between the south and east Octagon chapels. The Octagon was built over the grave of St Olaf and in medieval times housed the high altar and the shrine of the saint. The Octagon portal is a single doorway with a gable, turrets, a cluster of slender marble shafts with sculpted capitals as well as a richly profiled arch and a foliate inner arch with masks. There is a remarkable amount of sculptural detail for such a small portal. The (modern) wooden door is decorated with iron work. Three steps led up to the door from ground level. The steps of the portal cut into the base that runs all the

³⁴ Draper, ”Interpreting the Architecture of Wells Cathedral,”126.

³⁵ Draper, ”Interpreting the Architecture of Wells Cathedral,” 127.

way around the Octagon facade. Two large corbels protrude just above the ground course base and provide the base for the entire portal construction.

Three circular marble shafts rise up from so-called water-holding bases, each decorated with spurs. The marble shafts are lodged within semi-circular hollows, whose edges form attached shafts alternating with the marble shafts. The shafts are capped by capitals which seem to merge, especially on the right hand side of the portal, where the edges of the hollows also are capped by sculpted capitals. Of the astragals on the left side only one is smooth, whereas the two others are profiled. The astragals on the right hand side are all smooth. The abaci are continuous on both sides, deeply undercut.

The three capitals on the portal's left side consist of vegetal elements, the capital to the extreme right being a thick-leaved capital covered in fine acanthus incisions and the other two crocket capitals with stylized foliage and grapes.

The three capitals on the portal's right side consist of a mixture of foliage and figure sculpture. The capital closest to the door shows a small man and an ape hanging on to the foliage. Then there is a small foliate capital before we arrive at a combination that makes up the focal point of this side of the portal: A bird with its wings spread, possibly an eagle, two erect lions holding a grinning mask by its ears, another, similar bird and finally a dragon with a curling tail.

On top of the door jambs are two grinning masks, similar in style to each other but quite unlike the mask of the capitals. The foliage around the masks merges with the foliate five-lobed arch above the door. Just above the door sits a simple trefoil, covering the top of the door. The profiled arch of the portal is deeply undercut and the outer arch profile is decorated by a chevron.

Two octagonal pinnacles rise up from the abacus on either side of the portal and are united by a pointed gable, now carrying the coat of arms of the sixteenth century Archbishop Valkendorf and a modern, stylized rose. The joining of the gable and the pinnacles is marked by two foliate medallions.

The wooden door now opens inwards, but used to open outwards. There are traces of hinges on both sides of the door and there are also marks from kissing crosses having been attached on both sides.

2.2 Materials

The tradition of building in stone arrived in Norway with Christianity and greenschist (or greenstone) was the stone which was most commonly used for building in Trondheim and large parts of the Trøndelag area from the 1050's to approximately 1200.³⁶ In most cases only expensive details like windows, portals and sculpture were made in greenschist or soapstone, with the rest of the stone work consisting of other, less costly, types of stone. Only Trondheim cathedral and a few other churches were made from greenschist or soapstone ashlar, in addition to the other details mentioned. The desire to build in stone and the lack of local existing examples made foreign church buildings the most natural models for the new stone churches of Norway. Only foreign architects, masons and sculptors had the necessary knowledge and experience and had to be ordered from abroad.³⁷

Local greenschist seems to have been in general use up until c. 1200, after which there seems to have been a change to local soapstone. This could be for several reasons - one being that greenschist is harder and more layered than soap stone, thus less suitable for sculpture. Greenschist and soapstone can be easily confused at first glance, and both types were used side by side in Trondheim in the twelfth century.³⁸

Local marble was also used extensively at Trondheim cathedral and its earliest use was in the 1180's, for shafts and floor coverings in the Octagon.³⁹

When it comes to the Octagon, its lower parts are made of greenschist and the same goes for the lower part of the Octagon portal. Here the corbels, shaft bases and partly also the hollows for the shafts are of greenschist, whereas the capitals, arch, pinnacles and gable are of soapstone. The shafts are of marble.⁴⁰

2.3 Construction periods and dating

Construction periods

³⁶Per Storemyr, *The stones of Nidaros: An applied weathering Study of Europe's northernmost medieval cathedral*, (Doctor Engineer thesis, Norwegian University of Science and Technology NTNU, 1997), 101. Greenschist is a type of greenstone. Storemyr uses the term in order to distinguish the soft and foliated stone used at Trondheim Cathedral from other types of greenstone.

³⁷ Hans-Emil Lidén, *Middelalderen bygger i stein*, (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1974), 32.

³⁸ Storemyr, "The stones of Nidaros...", 101-102; Per Storemyr, "Stein til kvader og dekor i Trøndelags middelalderkirker – geologi, europeisk innflytelse og tradisjoner" in *Ecclesia Nidrosiensis 1153-1537: Søkelys på Nidaroskirkens og Nidarosprovinsens historie*, ed. Steinar Imsen, (Trondheim: Tapir, 2003), 450.

The main deposit for greenschist was situated at Øye (17 kilometers south of Trondheim) and seems to have been in use until c. 1200. At Øye there is also a small deposit of soapstone, which could be one of the reasons why greenschist and soapstone were used side by side in Trondheim in the twelfth century.

When the exploitation of the Øye quarry ended, soapstone became the most commonly used building stone. The closest deposit was at Bakkaune in Trondheim and seems to have been running from c. 1200 to 1350.

³⁹ Storemyr, "Stein til kvader og dekor...", 459.

There is no written evidence to document the construction of the Octagon. It is generally believed that the construction of the Octagon was started by Archbishop Eystein Erlandsson after his return from exile in England during the years 1180-83.⁴¹ This argument rests on stylistic grounds only, as there is no documentary evidence of this.⁴²

Archbishop Eystein's new cathedral in Trondheim was built on the foundations of King Olaf Kyrre's old Christ Church, in a building process that was part an addition to, and part demolition of, the old church. This process lasted from the start of the building of the transept chapels in the 1140-1150's to the completion of the west front and the nave sometime between 1250 and 1300.⁴³ The Octagon was constructed in the period after the transepts and the Chapter House (c.1170-1175) and before the new choir, which must have been completed by 1240.⁴⁴ In Fischer's opinion the Octagon was the first part of the new cathedral to be constructed, but Ekroll has successfully argued that it must have been built as a completion of the old Christ Church.⁴⁵ There must have been a break in the building works after Eystein's death, as the new archbishop went into exile shortly after, due to conflict with the king. King Sverre died in 1202, but there was no archbishop residing in Trondheim until the arrival of Archbishop Tore in 1206.⁴⁶

Dating of the Octagon portal

As mentioned in my introduction, the majority of scholars who have treated this topic, i.e. Nicolaysen, Larsen, Fischer, and Blindheim date *the lower parts* of the Octagon to the 1180's (Meyer's assessment is the second half of the twelfth century).⁴⁷ Ekroll dates the Octagon *exterior* to 1180-1200 and the interior to 1180-1210.⁴⁸

Among the scholars who have treated the Octagon portal specifically, the judgements vary, not only for the dating of the portal but also for the stylistic influences on the various elements: Johan Meyer, who dates the portal to 1183-1190, describes the portal as having

⁴⁰ Storemyr, *The stones of Nidaros*, 102.

⁴¹ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 132. An inscription in St John's chapel in the southern transept dates the consecration of the chapel to November 1161 – Eystein's first year as archbishop. It therefore seems likely that Archbishop Eystein would have been the patron for the transepts, the Chapter House and the Octagon.

⁴² Øystein Ekroll, "The shrine of St. Olav in Nidaros Cathedral" in *The Medieval Cathedral of Trondheim. Architectural and Ritual Constructions in their European Context*. Ed. Margrete Syrstad Andås et al., (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 174-175.

⁴³ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 346; Ekroll, *Med kleber og kalk*, 152.

⁴⁴ Ekroll, *Med kleber og kalk*, 154.

⁴⁵ Ekroll, "The shrine of St Olav in Nidaros Cathedral", 176.

⁴⁶ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 170.

⁴⁷ See Introduction: *Research History*

“late-Norman zig-zag-decorations”, the portal’s inner arch being of “lush foliage of French-Romanesque character”, the shafts English and “typically French capitals.”⁴⁹

Like Meyer, Martin Blindheim dates the portal to the same period as the ambulatory, i.e. 1183-1190. He argues that the foliage of the capitals inside the Octagon ambulatory and the Octagon portal’s foliage is the same and that the portal therefore must be from the same period. He also argues for a stylistic connection between “the long fat leaves” on the right side of the Octagon portal and certain capitals at Santiago de Compostela.⁵⁰

Brage Irgens Larsen however, dates the portal to the thirteenth century because of the stiff-leaf foliage on the portal’s inner arch and details of the astragals and abaci, without going into much detail about this, other than saying that both features are typical for Lincoln cathedral in the 1230-1250’s.⁵¹ Whereas he links the portal’s foliate capitals (on the left side of the portal) to Northern France via Canterbury and Lincoln, he also argues, based on iconography more than stylistic analysis, that there must be a link between the portal’s historiated capitals (on the right side of the portal) and the art of Norman Sicily

Gerhard Fischer dates the portal to the 1180’s mainly on stylistic grounds. He too mentions the Mediterranean aspect of some of the iconography, and like Larsen he links the foliate capitals to France, based on their general appearance, and the historiated capitals to Sicily. Fischer’s description goes into stylistic detail enough for us to be left with a somewhat contradictory image of the portal as part Romanesque, part Gothic, part Northern European and part Southern European – but he does not look at *all* the details and most of the elements he does look at are not treated sufficiently in depth. (This is only to be expected from such an extensive survey, as anything more would surely have been impossible.)

As we have seen, Peter Anker does not give a specific date for the portal - only a *terminus post quem* for the Octagon’s sculpted medallions (1200-1220). He refutes Larsen’s theory about a stylistic link between the sculpture of the Octagon (including the portal) and Norman Sicily as anything other than a hypothesis about a general connection between the Mediterranean and North-Western Europe in this period.⁵²

⁴⁸ Ekroll, *Med kleber og kalk*, 153-154.

⁴⁹ Meyer, *Domkirken i Trondhjem*, 71.

⁵⁰ Blindheim, *Norwegian Romanesque Decorative Sculpture*, 55-56.

⁵¹ Larsen, *De Gotiske skulpturer i Trondheim Domkirke*, 39.

⁵² Anker, “Høymiddelalderens skulptur i stein og tre”, 162-163.

Margrete Syrstad Andås, who is one of the most recent contributors to this debate, also argues for the 1180's as a reasonable dating for the Octagon portal, but with the possibility of a re-arrangement slightly later, based on the style of the two masks overlooking the entrance.⁵³ Like Fischer and Larsen, she also sees an iconographic connection between some of the portal's capitals and Southern Europe, but her suggestion is mainly revolves around South-Western France and Northern Spain.⁵⁴

Finally, Christopher Norton has suggested the late 1170s -1180's as a possible date for the portal's shafts and foliate capitals, based on stylistic comparisons with capitals at Canterbury Cathedral and St. Mary's Abbey, York.

The 1180's as a date for the construction of the Octagon portal seems well founded. This is however mainly based on studies of the capitals the portal, and not on detailed studies of the portal's other architectural elements. Interestingly, the views on stylistic influence from different geographical areas vary a lot: The same capital (the thick-leaved capital on the portal's left side) has been linked stylistically to Northern Spain (Meyer), Canterbury and Lincoln (Larsen) and France (Fischer). The foliage on the other two capitals on the same side has been described both as "typically French" (Meyer) and very close to Canterbury and St. Mary's Abbey, York (Norton). It has been suggested that the historiated capitals (on the portal's right side) may have been influenced by both Italian-Sicilian art (Larsen and Fischer) and Northern-Spanish and South-Western French capitals (Andås).

The workers and their origin

We have no documentation about the workers and where they may have come from. Mason's marks can sometimes give an indication of this, but since there are none on the portal itself, I have not been able to rely on this as a source of information.⁵⁵ As many of the portal's elements have not yet undergone any stylistic analysis, there has not been much discussion around possible models for the portal or its individual elements. However, Andås has suggested manuscript illumination as a possible model for the historiated capitals on the

⁵³ Andås, "The Octagon Doorway", 98.

⁵⁴ Andås, "The Octagon Doorway", 111, 114, 117, 119.

⁵⁵ Dorothea Fischer, "Stenhuggermerkene," in Gerhard Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim: Kirkebygget i middelalderen*, vol. 2, (Oslo: Land og Kirke, 1965), 545.

Dorothea Fischer mentions that there are masons' marks on the Octagon's base, but that they are from the sixteenth century restoration. Kjersti Kristoffersen at NDR is currently doing a new survey of masons' marks on Trondheim Cathedral and can confirm that no new information about the dating of the Octagon portal has come to light as of yet. E-mail from Kjersti Kristoffersen dated October 26th 2010.

portal's right side.⁵⁶ What we presume to know about the workers' origin is based on stylistic evidence only. Fischer and Ekroll have both treated this. Fischer's view is that the first construction period of the Octagon (the lower part) was headed by a Norwegian master builder with experience from England and the South-West France.⁵⁷ A large work force was in place – at least twenty different masons' marks can be found on the lower parts of the Octagon.⁵⁸ Fischer suggests that Eystein may have had Norwegian workers with him on his journey to England, experienced carpenters who could easily learn the art of stone masonry and who could create their own version of what they had seen abroad on their return.⁵⁹ The next phase, - the vaults of the Octagon ambulatory, the upper parts of the Octagon and the new choir – was executed by a small group (four to five masons' marks) of English masons, probably people with experience from Lincoln cathedral in the period before 1200.⁶⁰ Ekroll seems to agree with Fischer's interpretation.⁶¹ Hauglid has since argued that twice or three times as many workers may have been working on the Octagon and that the exterior walls could have been completed within a just few years.⁶²

2.4 Repairs and restorations

The many fires and collapses and subsequent restorations of Trondheim cathedral and its Octagon have been excellently treated elsewhere, so I have chosen to only briefly mention what is most relevant for the Octagon portal.⁶³

Medieval restorations

The great fire in 1328 wrought great damage to the eastern parts of the cathedral, especially inside the Octagon ambulatory and in the Octagon triforium.⁶⁴ This part of the church must have been rapidly rebuilt after the fire.⁶⁵ In 1349 the Black Death and the following plague in 1371 must have led to a stop in construction and repairs.⁶⁶ Another fire happened in 1432,

⁵⁶ Andås, "The Octagon Doorway", 119.

⁵⁷ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 160.

⁵⁸ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 161.

⁵⁹ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 132.

⁶⁰ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 168-169.

⁶¹ Ekroll, *Med kleber og kalk*, 153-154.

⁶² Hauglid, "Romanske konsollfriser", 35.

⁶³ Hauglid, "Romanske konsollfriser", 14-20.

⁶⁴ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 359.

⁶⁵ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 360, 376.

⁶⁶ Oluf Kolsrud, *Noregs Kyrkjesoga: Millomaldaren*, (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1958), 272. We have hardly any information about the cathedral at this period, but we do know that Archbishop Arne and all but one of the canons died in the plague. Before

without there being much information about the damages.⁶⁷ There was possibly yet another fire again in 1451, which may be why there is mention of great disrepair and neglect by 1453.⁶⁸ Only the most necessary repairs seem to have been taken on in this period and there was probably no longer an active mason's lodge at the cathedral.⁶⁹ The large lancet window which was inserted into the north transept gable after the fire in 1432 could indicate that mass was being celebrated in the transept because of damages to the east end of the cathedral.⁷⁰ The same goes for the choir south portal (also known as "the Royal Entrance"), where, also in the fifteenth century, the ruined portal was walled up and a double lancet window was inserted above a small doorway in order to provide light.⁷¹

In 1510, the new archbishop Erik Valkendorf started a much needed restoration project.⁷² Valkendorf's restoration has proven to be purely technical and carried out with great respect for the work of earlier periods. The works were carefully carried out and were "signed" by Valkendorf's coat of arms.⁷³ In addition to restoring the four south-eastern fields of the Octagon ambulatory screen, Valkendorf's men also did repairs to the Octagon's exterior, including the Octagon portal. All three Octagon chapel gables were restored in this period and we find Valkendorf's coat of arms both on the south and east chapels' gables.⁷⁴

When it comes to the Octagon portal, Valkendorf's coat of arms on the gable indicates a restoration of at least the top half of the portal. Right up until the nineteenth century restoration a thirteenth century foliate capital sat on top of the gable, probably re-used by Valkendorf's people from the remains of the ruined Octagon ambulatory screen.⁷⁵ On the Octagon's base profile we find masons' marks from Valkendorf's period.⁷⁶

In the period from Valkendorf's departure in 1521 to the great fire in 1531, which ruined both the cathedral and parts of town, Trondheim cathedral again fell into disrepair.

1349 there had been 300 priests in the see of Nidaros and after yet another plague struck in 1371, only 40 remained. This must have slowed down any restoration or building works considerably.

⁶⁷ Schønning, *Beskrivelse over den tilforn meget prektige og vidberømte Dom-Kirke i Trondhjem*, 315.

⁶⁸ Kolsrud, *Olavskyrkja i Trondheim*, 53.

⁶⁹ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 387.

⁷⁰ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 387.

⁷¹ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 387.

⁷² Kolsrud, *Olavskyrkja i Trondheim*, 54.

⁷³ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 401.

⁷⁴ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 392, 399-400.

⁷⁵ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 396. The same type of capital can be found re-used in Valkendorf's restoration of the Octagon screen and a similar capital was found in a fourteenth century niche on the northern Octagon chapel's exterior wall. In Fischer's opinion these capitals were from the remains of a thirteenth century screen still sitting inside the Octagon when Valkendorf started his restoration.

⁷⁶ Fischer, "Stenhuggermerkene", 545.

Although the cathedral continued to be in use, this state of neglect would last until a new restoration started in 1869.

Architect Christie's restoration of the Octagon and the Octagon portal

The modern restoration of Trondheim cathedral started in July 1869 headed by architect H. E. Schirmer and continued under architect C. Christie from 1872 until 1906. The Octagon facade was restored during the years 1872-1876. There was a conscious effort to re-use medieval ashlar where possible and the old medieval quarries were re-opened to provide new stone for the restoration. Where sculpture and décor had to be re-carved, this was based as much as possible on existing remains *in situ*.

The Octagon portal was not restored all at once, but rather in periods due to various practical reasons, such as varying access to building materials, weather conditions and disruption because of the Coronation in 1873.

As mentioned earlier, the Octagon's base profile had been restored in the sixteenth century and in 1873 it was restored again where needed. The base on the right side of the portal was restored based on the appearance of the left side, as the stones on the right had been removed and inside the wall roughly hewn ashlar were found, showing signs of having been the same shape as the stones of the left side.⁷⁷ Unfortunately Christie's account does not provide any information about the corbels above the ground course, which are quite unusual looking. The portal's arch was also restored at this time, partly by smaller pieces being inserted, partly by completely new sections of the arch being carved.⁷⁸

In 1874 the damaged parts of capitals and shaft bases were restored and several new shaft bases were carved and inserted.⁷⁹ Here Christie says "several new bases" and not "all," although by now there are only restored bases in place. The marble shafts on either side of the portal are all new. As we can see from photograph no. 124 from before the restoration, they were all missing (Fig. 3). I have not been able to find any information about the insertion of the new shafts, whether in Christie's account or in Fischer's archaeological description. It seems likely that they would have been inserted with the new bases in 1874.

⁷⁷ Christie's Account, Second half of 1873, 27.

⁷⁸ Christie's Account, Second half of 1873, 28.

⁷⁹ Christie's Account, Second half of 1874, 39.

The niches, or hollows, for the marble shafts have been "patched" with new pieces of stone. I have not found any information about this in Christie or Fischer, but photos from after the restoration show that this has been done.⁸⁰

The capitals were also restored in this period. Most of the thick-leaved capital to the extreme left, or south side of the portal, is original but on photograph no. 126 from before the restoration we see that two of the tips of the thick leaves are missing (Fig. 4). New parts have been inserted here (Fig. 5). The two foliate capitals next to it are more restored than would seem at first glance. On the pre-restoration photo we see that there is hardly anything left of the foliage and only the crossing stems on the lower part of the chalice remain (Fig. 4). Gerhard Schøning's description from 1762 also mentions this: "How the heads of the capitals above the pillars on the other side of the door used to be is now unrecognizable, although they mainly seem to have consisted of flower-work, however with some changes from the previous."⁸¹ The capitals on the right side of the portal, or on the north side, are somewhat damaged and withered, but seem to have been restored only on the right hand side, where the eagle and dragon meet.

Still in 1874, Christie states that the Octagon portal's gable was restored by some stones being repaired and some new stones being carved.⁸² Schøning mentions two knocked-off heads that at some point must have been sitting on either side of the portal where the gable starts on the lower part of the turrets.⁸³ On the pre-restoration photos it is impossible to see whether there were ever any ornaments there (Fig. 3), and now there are two foliate twirls there, which I have not been able to find any information about. They were most likely added when the gable was restored.

Protruding iron-fragments on the tops of the two pinnacles indicate that they used to have ornaments. The broken surface of a ruined top stone that was found in the wall turned out to fit one of the pinnacles perfectly and new ornaments were carved based on this.⁸⁴ The rose on the gable top is new and I have not been able to find any information about this and about what happened to the thirteenth-century capital which it replaced.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ See illustration in Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 1965, 141.

⁸¹ Schøning, *Beskrivelse...*, 77. "Hvordane Hovedernes Zirater over Pillarerne paa den anden Side af Døren har været, er nu ukiendeligt, dog synes de mestendels at have bestaaet af Blomster-Arbeide, skjønt med nogen Forandring fra det forige."

⁸² Christie's Account, Second half of 1874, 39.

⁸³ Schøning, *Beskrivelse...*, 77.

⁸⁴ Christie's Account, Second half of 1874, 39

⁸⁵ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 145.

In the first half of 1876 new steps were made. I have no information about the door and the door which it replaced.⁸⁶ On the pre-restoration photos the door is a simple wooden door, without any decoration. It was broader and went further down than the present door, covering most of the steps. It also turned outwards, like all church doors on Norway after 1822.

In the second half of 1876 the foliate arch inside the actual portal's arch was restored. Christie informs us that it was very much damaged, which is also clear to see from the pre-restoration photo (Fig. 6). New stones were inserted where the original stones were too damaged to be re-used, some were re-carved based on remains in the actual arch and some were reconstructed based on arches on the Octagon chapels.⁸⁷

The two grinning masks seem to be original but there is no additional information about them in Christie's account or in Fischer's archaeological description. The trefoil above the door is new. Fischer says that "the trefoil above the door is also new, but profiles and details are certain enough."⁸⁸ I would like to return to this later, as this arch has revealed itself to be less straightforward than it at first seemed. As much of the modern restorations in the twentieth century have not been recorded, it has not been possible to confirm every detail.⁸⁹

To sum up, we see that in the sixteenth century the Octagon's base profile and the gable were restored, then in the period between 1873 and 1876 the base profile was restored again, in addition to the shafts bases, much of the foliate capitals on the left side, part of the historiated capitals on the right side, the gable (with the pinnacle caps and foliate rosettes) and the foliate arch. We have no information about the corbel bases and the two grinning masks, which must be original. The steps, the marble shafts, the door, the rosette on the gable and the trefoil arch are new.

Part 3. Stylistic analysis of the Octagon portal's elements

3. The method of stylistic analysis: Description and diagnostic criteria

⁸⁶ Christie's Account, First half of 1876, 50.

⁸⁷ Christie's Account, Second half of 1876, 50

Description is the first stage of stylistic analysis, but if we fail to pick the right diagnostic criteria to describe and to compare, we run the risk of ending up in a self-made “prison of words” and we will get nowhere.⁹⁰ Erla B. Hohler argues that stylistic analysis, presuming the right diagnostic criteria are employed, can be very successful in examining the problems posed in medieval art history in more recent times, such as investigation into the *milieu* of the anonymous medieval artist, his background, his patron and his audience.⁹¹ The method of stylistic analysis, when used correctly, can break the work of art down into its most minute details and reveal the complexity of influences behind it. This of course depends on the selection of right diagnostic criteria. Returning to Liepe’s work on this, she specifies that the criteria chosen need to be made clear during the investigation so that in the argument, the similarities and the dissimilarities can be weighed against each other and the importance attached to each type of relation – likeness versus difference – can be justified.⁹²

In my opinion, this is one of the biggest challenges with a subject as complex as the Octagon portal, because in many instances it is difficult to find comparative material for the various elements. In some instances we find elements of similar form, but employed in a different way elsewhere. Does this make for a justified comparison? The various stylistic elements of the portal obviously demand different criteria. I will try to specify at the beginning of each chapter what the criteria are, then proceed to look for comparative material and make a comparison, – keeping in mind the relationship between similarities and dissimilarities, - in order to see if any information about the elements of the portal can be gleaned from this. At the end of the section on stylistic analysis I will sum up my findings to see if we now have any more information about the construction and dating of the Octagon portal. I will then proceed to the next part where I investigate these results in relation to the perspective of style as a result of choice.

Comparative material

The comparative material I have selected is geographically very varied and stretches from Scotland and Northern England via Northern and Southern France to Northern Spain and Italy. The reason for such a wide selection is partly based on the assumptions in previous

⁸⁸ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 140.

⁸⁹ Hauglid, *Romanske konsollfriser*, 26.

⁹⁰ Erla B. Hohler, ”Stilanalytisk metode og norsk middelaldermaleri”, *Collegium Medievale*, 2008: 72.

⁹¹ Hohler, ”Stilanalytisk metode...”, 78.

research about stylistic or iconographic connections to France and the Mediterranean world in general, and partly on the international character of the Western Medieval church and its building practices, which facilitated the transfer of models and workers across vast distances.⁹³ Fischer suggests that the decorative scheme of the Octagon in general could be the result of building practices observed abroad, either by Archbishop Eystein or by people accompanying him.⁹⁴ In my opinion this approach does not allow for the skills and experience required in the design and execution of architecture and sculpture on this level. It is important to keep in mind the efforts and resources that were being poured into a building like the Octagon, which has a decorative scheme only highly skilled artists could have designed and executed. I therefore find it necessary, in addition to the stylistic analysis, to investigate possible channels of communication and distribution of models for the various elements of the Octagon portal. Medieval stone masons in the twelfth century were a highly skilled and sought-after elite, which travelled often and widely.⁹⁵ I shall argue that the international character of the sculpture of the Octagon portal is the work of foreign specialists with a varied international background, who used models based on manuscript illumination as well as their own moulding profiles and that the stylistic inconsistencies could be due to, not an actual rebuilding, but a break in the works and then a continuation with workers from a different background. We know that there most likely were several breaks in during the construction period, the longest probably between Eystein's death in 1188 and the continuation of the works in the early 1200's.⁹⁶

4. The corbel supports, bases, shafts and recesses

4.1 Briefly about the portal structure

Two aspects of the Octagon portal's construction are unusual: It does not start at ground level, but above the Octagon base, with steps leading up to it. Also, it is not composed by gradual recesses in the wall like most twelfth century portals, but consists of a construction of shafts, capitals and a gable carried by corbels, as if it had been added to the facade as an

⁹² Lena Liepe, "Art history and the concept of style", unpublished manuscript, 2008: 3.

⁹³ Lidén, *Middelalderen bygger i stein*, 32

⁹⁴ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 160.

⁹⁵ Wirth, *La datation de la sculpture médiévale*, 148, 151, 219.

⁹⁶ See Introduction: *Research History*.

after-thought (Fig 1). This “glued-on” aspect of the portal makes it relevant to question the intention behind it – was it a part of the original design of the Octagon facade or did it appear as a practical solution at a later stage?

It is not easy to find comparative material for this type of portal structure. It is tempting to look to the portal fore-hall which originated in Tuscany/Lombardy and which is also known from Apulia and Sicily in the twelfth century (Fig 7). Without implying that there are any stylistic affinities between the Octagon portal and my Apulian example, I would like to point to the striking similarity of the actual concept behind the structure: Both the Octagon portal and the Lombardic pre-hall consist of supports coming out of the wall and carrying the entire portal structure. I will return to the question of the origin of the portal’s structure later, in the concerning the gable and pinnacles, but for now let us just say that the Octagon portal is the result of an unusual solution.

4.2 The corbel supports

The Octagon portal rests on corbels protruding from the wall just above the Octagon’s base profile (Fig. 8 and 9). The shape of the corbel supports echo the Classical *cyma recta* profile on the Octagon base on both sides of the door.⁹⁷ This is a Classical moulding profile, often used in Romanesque architecture. Could it be that these profiles were carved initially and that the portal originally had, or was intended to have, a different appearance?⁹⁸ This could mean that the corbel supports were inserted later and designed to match the *cyma recta* profiles.

As mentioned earlier, we have no specific information about the corbels themselves and Fischer seems to be uncertain of their dating.⁹⁹ In my opinion the Octagon portal’s corbels can be linked stylistically to the corbel of the refectory pulpit at Fountains Abbey (Yorkshire) (c. 1180), which, just like the portal’s corbels, is based on the *cyma recta* profile (Fig. 10). Unlike our portal’s corbels, the corbel at Fountains is decorated with foliage and has a profiled base which blends in with the profiled course on the wall. The portal’s corbels

⁹⁷ Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, s.v. “cyma recta,” <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/148348/cyma-recta>, (accessed July 12th 2011); Hans-Emil Lidén, *Middelalderen bygger i stein*, (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1997), 25-26.

⁹⁸ In my opinion the corbels echo the form of the base profile and not vice versa, because the *cyma recta* of the base has the more classical execution of the two. The *cyma recta* form of the corbels is not balanced, but has an emphasis mainly on the convex form.

⁹⁹ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 140. Fischer calls them “the strange, indented corbel mouldings” and seems to have been unsure of the dating, saying that “one could be tempted to believe that they were from the time of Valkendorf’s

are not decorated, but they too blend in with the Octagon's profiled base, although the effect is one of much more simplicity in Trondheim. The shape of the corbel at Fountains – from the base up to the edge – is the same shape as the Trondheim corbels, except for the actual upper edge, which is indented at Fountains and oblique in Trondheim. In addition to this, the use of this shape as a corbel is the same in both examples. In my opinion, the similarities present in this case (form, adaptation to surrounding architecture, the function of carrying a larger structure) are more substantial than the dissimilarities (decoration), which makes a stylistic connection between the two examples likely. Cistercian building-craft in the north of England seems to have experimented a lot with corbel design, inventing new shapes for (amongst other things) the big projections of refectory pulpits.¹⁰⁰ Presupposing that the Trondheim corbels are from roughly the same period as those of Fountains Abbey, this would imply a date corresponding to the last two decades of the twelfth century, which would make them contemporary with the rest of the lower parts of the Octagon – including the *cyma recta* profiles. If the *cyma recta* profiles were carved before the corbels were intended, it must have been not long before. This seems unlikely, but not impossible.

4.3 The bases

The bases for the marble shafts are double water-holding bases with spurs. A closer look at the photograph from before the restoration, reveals that the bases were all there in 1869, but in poor condition (Fig.3).

The bases have been restored with slightly different profiles.¹⁰¹ The effect in comparing the two is as if the rolls of the bases on the right hand side have “loosened” and slid downwards, compared with the left hand side (Fig. 11 and 12). Fischer's profile only shows the bases on the left side of the portal, which is most likely the side which was best preserved (Fig. 13, profile C) and this is the profile I will be referring to in my discussion.

The water-holding base is a distinctive feature of the Early English style and was in use for about a century, from the 1150's until it started going out of fashion in the 1240's.¹⁰² It consists of two rolls, both generally filleted, with an intermediate hollow which can be from a semi-circle to a three-quarter circle, thus able to contain water. The shallower the

restoration, but that this by no means is certain. We will notice that Valkendorf's builder in most cases followed the older parts accurately.”

¹⁰⁰ Edward S. Prior, *A History of Gothic Art in England*, (London: Bell, 1900), 107.

¹⁰¹ One of the original bases still exists in the NDR archives. I have been informed that it is from the portal's left side and that the restoration seems very accurate. I would like to thank Øystein Ekroll for this information.

hollow is, the earlier the base is likely to be in the Early English period.¹⁰³ The Trondheim bases are not particularly shallow, but rather narrow and deep. Also, in earlier examples (c. 1155-1190) the lower roll is generally slightly flattened and becomes a large, spreading roll.¹⁰⁴ This is not the case in Trondheim, where the lower roll is large, but not flattened.¹⁰⁵ Examples of double water holding bases do exist, like the great pier from Lincoln cathedral (Fig. 14, profile 18).¹⁰⁶

The profile of the Trondheim bases also differs slightly from much of the English comparative material. The rolls are filleted, but seem to be pointing upwards - not outwards - and the lower roll is not particularly flattened, but also points upwards. The hollows are deep and possibly more pear-shaped than circular (Compare fig. 13, profile C with fig. 15, profiles 6 (Furness Abbey, Cumbria), 7 (Fountains Abbey, Yorkshire) and 8 (Jervaulx Abbey, Yorkshire). One example of both double water-holding bases and upward pointing rolls (at least for the large lower roll) is the great pier from Lincoln cathedral (Fig. 14, profile 18).

Now, let us consider the comparison between the Octagon portal's bases and the English material again. Shallow hollows and non-flattened lower rolls indicate a middle to later period of Early English (i.e. more towards 1200 or later) and the fact that there are double water-holding bases with at least some upward-pointing rolls at Lincoln indicates a date after 1192, when the construction of the new choir was started.

Interestingly enough, single water-holding bases with similar fillets and upward-turning rolls appear at Trondheim cathedral's Royal Entrance, which is thought to have been constructed sometime in the first quarter of the early thirteenth century (Fig. 16, profile G).¹⁰⁷ They can also be found in the choir pier bases, together with double water-holding bases (Fig. 17, profiles D and E), dating from the same period. In my opinion this strengthens my view of the bases of the Octagon portal as dating from the early thirteenth century rather than from the late twelfth century.

Spurs

¹⁰² Francis Bond, *Gothic Architecture in England*, (London: Batsford, 1905), 449.

¹⁰³ F.A. Paley, *A Manual of Gothic Mouldings*, (London: John van Voorst, 1845), 64.

¹⁰⁴ Bond, *Gothic Architecture in England*, 451.

¹⁰⁵ This is however the case with the bases on the right hand side, which seem to have been restored according to this earlier type of water holding base and have much softer rolls. This is peculiar, unless the remains on the right hand side were more substantial than it looks from the pre-restoration photograph and indicated this type of roll.

¹⁰⁶ Paley, *A Manual of Gothic Mouldings*, 64.

¹⁰⁷ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 239, 241, 244.

The spurs on the Octagon portal's bases have clearly been restored together with the bases.¹⁰⁸ The spur is originally a Roman architectural feature, which continued to be popular on both sides of the Channel in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.¹⁰⁹ Spurs could take on different shapes, often the form of the leafage of the capital, like here, where the leaves of the spurs are the same as the leaves of the portal's foliate capitals.¹¹⁰ We cannot of course know whether this was the original appearance, but it is not unlikely.

4.4 Shafts and hollows

The use of marble shafts on the Octagon portal, like the other marble shafts on the Octagon facade, must date from the 1180's at the earliest, when marble was first used at Trondheim Cathedral.¹¹¹ The present shafts are new, but seen in context with the rest of the Octagon facade, it is most likely that the original shafts were marble. The use of white marble on dark soapstone at Trondheim cathedral in this period coincides with the use of Purbeck marble in England (e.g. Canterbury, Lincoln and several others) where the effect was the exactly the opposite: Dark shafts against light sandstone.¹¹²

Portal shafts lodged in hollows with a profiled edge, instead of in square recesses, is a distinctly Gothic feature.¹¹³ The isolated shaft inside the hollow, "so far that the hand, or even the arm, may be passed around them" is a typically Early English feature.¹¹⁴ We come across the same feature in Trondheim cathedral's choir triforium dating from the beginning of the thirteenth century and on the screen in the Cathedral museum dating from the late thirteenth century (Fig. 70). However, none of these examples have hollows which have the same profile as the Octagon portal's hollows. The hollows of the Octagon portal are semi-circular openings, where the marble shafts stand isolated and with a beaked roll constituting the alternating attached soapstone shafts (Fig. 18). The beaked roll is the same shape as one of the arch mouldings used at Furness Abbey (Cumbria) (c.1180), although there it was employed differently (Fig. 19, profile III).¹¹⁵ We have already seen the inventive use of

¹⁰⁸ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 140. Fischer says: "The bases and spurs are new, but there seems to have been good remains."

¹⁰⁹ Bond, *Gothic Architecture in England*, 455.

¹¹⁰ Bond, *Gothic Architecture in England*, 446.

¹¹¹ Storemyr, "Stein til kvader og dekor...", 459; Ekroll, *Med kleber og kalk*, 155.

¹¹² Storemyr, "Stein til kvader og dekor...", 459, 461.

¹¹³ Lidén, *Middelalderen bygger i stein*, 65.

¹¹⁴ Paley, *A Manual of Gothic Mouldings*, 56.

¹¹⁵ I would like to thank Stuart Harrison for pointing this out to me.

corbels as supports for the portal structure. I believe that this too could be a result of a familiar element being employed in a new way.

Summary for the lower part of the Octagon portal

The evidence for the corbels, bases, shafts and hollows, points in the direction of workers with a Northern English background, most likely from the last two decades of the twelfth century or a little later. The “Northern English” background seems to be divided between Yorkshire Cistercian influences (Fountains and Jervaulx) from the 1180’s onwards and Lincoln Cathedral in the 1190’s. The *cyma recta* profiles and corbels seem close enough in time to be contemporary, although there is of course a possibility that they could have carved the *cyma recta* profiles before the break in the work at Archbishop Eystein’s exile in 1181-83 and decided to go in a different direction with the corbels after 1183.

5. The capitals: The “cactus capital” on the portal’s left side

As described earlier, the cluster of capitals on the portal’s left side consists of three foliate capitals. The capital to the extreme left is composed by two rows of long, thick leaves which curl slightly outwards and downwards - two leaves on the lower row and three on the upper row. The leaves are decorated with delicate carvings of acanthus leaves, five-lobed leaves and beading (Fig. 5 and 20). From the pre-restoration photo we can see that most of this capital is original (Fig. 4). Fischer referred to this capital as the “cactus capital” because of the thickness of its leaves.¹¹⁶ There are several “cactus capitals” on the facade of the octagon, inside the ambulatory and in the ambulatory chapels, but this is the only one with any kind of surface decoration. This capital is in fact an acanthus capital, but the acanthus is not very noticeable unless one stands close and the shape of the thick leaves is very prominent. I have therefore chosen to use keep Fischer’s name for it, because it is descriptive and because it avoids the confusion between the two main stylistic aspects of this capital – acanthus capital or “smooth leaf capital”.

5.1 The tradition of the smooth leaf capital

¹¹⁶ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 140, 148.

This type of capital, when it is without surface decoration, is usually referred to as a “smooth leaf” (or “feuille lisse” in French) in more recent research literature and it is in no way unique to Trondheim Cathedral.¹¹⁷ It belongs to a tradition dating back to the Roman Empire and is a simplified, smooth-leaf version of the Corinthian capital. The tradition continued through the early Middle-Ages and examples can be found in areas as diverse as Muslim Spain, Merovingian France, Lombard Italy and the Carolingian Empire.¹¹⁸ The smooth leaf capital was originally characterized by an indented abacus, corner volutes and rows of large leaves.¹¹⁹ After a decline in use around year 1000 we come across this type of capital again in England and France during the period 1040-1050 and different versions developed.¹²⁰ The tradition which the Trondheim smooth leaf capital belongs to, evolved in the south-west of France, where it appears at, amongst others, St. Sernin de Toulouse, and St. Sever. It is simplified, classicizing and is characterized by an increased plasticity of the leaves, adaptability to the surrounding architecture and similarity with the vegetal origin (Fig. 21).

¹²¹ In my opinion the “cactus capital” of the Octagon portal clearly belongs to this type of smooth leaf capital. In order to define the Trondheim capital’s place in this tradition more clearly, it would be interesting to look at it in the context of the series of smooth leaf capitals in the Octagon, which in my opinion can be divided into several different groups stylistically. This is however a whole study in itself and will not be treated here.¹²² I would only like to

¹¹⁷ Marcel Durliat, *La Sculpture Romane de la Route de Saint-Jacques – de Conques à Compostelle*, (Mont-de-Marsan: Comité d’Etudes sur l’Histoire et l’Art de la Gascogne, 1990), 175; Eliane Vergnolle, “Réflexions sur les chapiteaux à feuilles lisses à propos de Saint-Sever,” in *Saint-Sever, Millénaire de l’Abbaye*, Colloque International 25, 26, et 27 Mai 1985, ed. J. Cabanot, (Mont-de-Marsan: Comité d’Etudes sur l’Histoire et l’Art de la Gascogne, 1986), 184.

¹¹⁸ Maylis Baylé, *La Trinité de Caen. Sa place dans l’histoire de l’Architecture et du Décor Romains*, (Droz, Genève, 1979), 77-78; Vergnolle, “Réflexions...”, 186; Katherine Watson *French Romanesque and Islam. Andalusian elements in French architectural decoration c. 1030-1180*. BAR International Series 488(i), Oxford, 1989, 11.

¹¹⁹ Vergnolle, “Réflexions...”, 185.

¹²⁰ Baylé, *La Trinité de Caen*, 78.

¹²¹ All information in this paragraph is based on Vergnolle, “Réflexions...”, 186-189. The smooth leaf capital signifies a step in the development of the Corinthian capital since it is in fact a Corinthian capital that has not been completed. They were often juxtaposed with completed Corinthian capitals, especially where the Corinthian capital was the main decorative theme.

¹²² In spite of slight stylistic differences, the smooth leaf capitals of the Octagon all share certain characteristics: 1) They all have a high “neck.” The leaves of the lower and the upper row curl outwards almost at the same level, or nearly on level with the abacus. 2) They are all attached - not free-standing - and well adapted to the architecture. 3) Except for the Octagon portal’s capital, they are all smooth with no surface decoration.

point out that the Octagon portal's "cactus capital" belongs with a group of capitals which can be found in the blind arcading inside the Octagon chapels. The composition of the capital and the shape and thickness of the leaves all indicate this, although the portal's capital is slightly larger.

5.2 The Octagon portal's "cactus capital"

The "cactus capital" is unique in having the same capital composition and thick, outward-curling leaves as the Octagon chapel capitals, as well as a rich surface decoration consisting of acanthus leaves in the smaller fields at the base and on the level above, mixed in places with finely veined, pointed five-lobed leaves (Fig. 5). By capital composition I mean the number of rows of leaves and the number of leaves in each row. Both the "cactus capital" and the chapel capitals have two rows of leaves with four leaves in each row (all these capitals are attached, so only the distribution of leaves indicates the number of an isolated, full capital. A row of beading decorates the edges of two of the large top leaves. This capital has been restored, and from the pre-restoration photo we can clearly see that all the tips of the capital's leaves were missing and have been replaced – all but the leaf to the extreme left, which was still in place but has been re-carved, and the leaf to the extreme right, which is still in place (Fig. 4). From this it looks to me like the sharp-edged, pointed acanthus leaves are the only leaves which can be said with certainty to be original and that the softer, fine-veined leaves could be a result of the restoration – possibly based on the leaves of the leafy capital next to it.

5.3 The smooth leaf capital in other parts of Europe

The smooth leaf capital is one of the most unusual features of the Octagon portal and not easy to find comparative material for in Norway, nor indeed in the British Isles. I have therefore found it necessary to examine its occurrence in other parts of Europe before I can come to any conclusion about its use in Trondheim.

For my comparative material, I have chosen to look for the stylistic features of the smooth leaf capital which seem relevant: The composition of the capital, the appearance and shape of the leaves and possible surface decoration. The surface decoration is interesting since the "cactus capital" is the only capital at Trondheim which is not smooth.

I have chosen to not take into account the abaci and astragals of all the capitals in question, since my comparative material spans a wide time period and there is bound to be a

lot of variation variation in these features. I will therefore only consider these features where they seem relevant due to proximity in time.

I will be referring to smooth leaf capitals as just “smooth leaf” and to both acanthus leaf capitals and thicker leaves with surface decoration as “decorated leaf”.

5.4 England

There is not much comparative material for the smooth leaf capital in England. Brief references have been made to both Lincoln and Canterbury by earlier Norwegian scholars as possible sources of influence for the “cactus capital”. Canterbury and Lincoln were both big construction projects in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries and we know that Archbishop Eystein visited Lincoln and probably also Canterbury during his English exile, so this is where I would like to start.¹²³

Lincoln Cathedral

In his work from 1963 on the Gothic sculpture of Trondheim Cathedral, Brage Irgens Larsen suggests northern France as an area of influence for the acanthus decoration of the smooth leaf capital, but concludes that the influence from “the long, oval, pointed leaves of the Canterbury style,” is more likely, giving the north portal of the cathedral of Lincoln’s west front as an example.

The capitals of the north doorway at Lincoln’s west front are original, although a little retouched (c. 1146).¹²⁴ The acanthus leaf capitals on the right hand side must be what Larsen was referring to, especially the middle capital (Fig. 20). There is some similarity with the Trondheim capital, but only in the lower half of the capital: The surface treatment with the acanthus leaves, large leaves alternating with short leaves. However, the leaves of this capital are thin acanthus leaves and not the thick “cactus leaves” from Trondheim. The upper half of the Lincoln capital is also of a different character from the Trondheim capital. Where the Trondheim capital only consists of two rows of leaves, the Lincoln capital has many elements intact of the classicizing version of the Corinthian capital – not surprising considering that it is several decades earlier than the Trondheim capital. This type of capital came to Lincoln from the abbey church of Saint-Denis (Paris) and was not used again in

¹²³ Larsen, *De Gotiske Skulpturer i Trondheim Domkirke*, 39; Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 140.

¹²⁴ George Zarnecki, *Studies in Romanesque Sculpture*, (London: The Dorian Press, 1979), 15.

England until the construction of the new choir at Canterbury in 1174.¹²⁵ In general the smooth leaf capital is not very common in the north of England.¹²⁶

Canterbury cathedral

Gerhard Fischer's opinion was that the capital itself is "reminiscent of the Canterbury feretory, but the points of the leaves are not curled up like they are at Canterbury. In that respect they are more reminiscent of French late-Romanesque capitals." The new choir at Canterbury Cathedral was constructed in the period 1174-1179 by the architect William of Sens.¹²⁷ I struggle to find direct comparisons with the Trondheim "cactus capital" at Canterbury and I am unsure of what Fischer was actually referring to there, as there are several types of crocket capitals in the east end of the cathedral, but nothing there which can truly be described as smooth leaf capitals.

There are capitals in Canterbury's Trinity Chapel, both in the main arcade, in the ambulatory and on the triforium level, which can be said to have common traits with the Trondheim smooth leaf capital, but only in a superficial manner. Perhaps this is what Fischer was referring to.

The attached capitals in the choir can be said to have something in common with the Trondheim smooth leaf capital, but not much. The composition is similar, with two rows of leaves and a more equal distribution between them, but again the treatment of the leaves is completely different. Here the leaves are thick at the base and taper upwards, ending in crockets, whereas the leaves of the Trondheim capital are the same width all the way up to the tips. The same goes for the capitals on the triforium level (Fig. 23). They are clearly inspired by the smooth leaf tradition, but they too are simplified crocket capitals. In my opinion, Canterbury is not the place to look for parallels to the Trondheim "cactus capital".

What can be of some interest, however, is the surface treatment of some of the capitals capping the large piers in the Canterbury choir. The east transept piers – North 10 and South 10 were placed in 1177-1178 and are both double piers with attached colonnettes in dark Bethersden "marble" and capitals in Caen limestone.¹²⁸ Just like the Trondheim

¹²⁵ Zarnecki *Studies in Romanesque Sculpture*, 15.

¹²⁶ Verbal information from Stuart Harrison on his visit to Trondheim on March 31st 2011.

¹²⁷ Francis Woodman, *The Architectural History of Canterbury Cathedral*, (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1981), 89, 109.

¹²⁸ Roslin Mair, "The Choir Capitals of Canterbury Cathedral, 1174-84", in *Medieval Art and Architecture at Canterbury before 1220*, (The British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions 1979, London 1982), 56.

capital, capital North 10 (Fig. 24) has a small, five-lobed leaf at the base, with sprigs of multi-lobed, ribbed leaves splitting off from the larger corner leaf and leaning to almost join above it.¹²⁹ Unlike the Trondheim capital, all the leaves on the Canterbury capital are five-lobed and the volute is a leafy scroll, not a thick leaf. Roslin Mair relates this type of composition to the now lost cathedral of Arras (Pas-de- Calais) in northern France and capitals with a similar type of composition there.¹³⁰ The Canterbury capital has a much more shallow relief than the Arras capital, and the Trondheim capital even more so. In addition, the leaves of the composition on the Trondheim capital are not the soft five-lobed leaves of the Canterbury and Arras capitals, but acanthus leaves, like at St. Leu d'Esserent, also in northern France (Picardy) (c. 1180's) (Fig. 25 a). Interestingly, there is another similarity with St. Leu. The small, flattened leaves along the edges of the "cactus capital's" lower leaves are paralleled in some of the twirling, leafy crockets in St. Leu's ambulatory (Fig 25 b and Fig. 25 c). In my opinion this indicates not a direct influence from Canterbury, but rather a common intermediary in Northern France. There are strong stylistic influences from several places in northern France in the Canterbury choir and presbytery, which again is likely to reflect the influence from Ile-de France. William of Sens's decorative repertoire has been defined as "Channel school" – a regional, northern French/south-eastern English school of architecture whose elements can be found at Canterbury for at least two decades before 1174.¹³¹

Since both the origin of the smooth leaf capital and perhaps also the origin of the surface decoration of the Octagon portal's "cactus capital" point in the direction of France, this is the most obvious place to continue our investigation.

5.5 Northern France

Noyon

The cathedral of Noyon (1145-1235) in Oise, Picardy has an ambulatory with piers with smooth leaf capitals, dating most likely from around 1170.¹³² The capitals capping the four easternmost piers of the ambulatory arcade are all smooth leaf capitals, each with a slightly

¹²⁹ I am using the numeration of capitals found in Mair, "The Choir Capitals of Canterbury Cathedral ...", which in turn is based on Willis, R., *The Architectural History of Canterbury Cathedral*, London, 1845.

¹³⁰ Mair, "The Choir Capitals of Canterbury Cathedral...", 62.

¹³¹ Woodman, *The Architectural History of Canterbury Cathedral*, 109.

¹³² Jacques Thiebaut, *Les cathédrales gothiques en Picardie*, (C.R.D.P. d'Amiens, 1987), 39-40.

different interpretation (Fig. 26). Except for one capital which has four extra flat, small leaves on the lower row, these capitals all have two rows of leaves, with four leaves in each row. The leaves are smooth with no surface decoration, except for a central vein on each leaf. The lower leaves curl slightly outwards, ending in a flat point. The larger leaves curl outwards, and end in a small, tight volute. The leaves here are quite flat and slim, compared with Trondheim, with a deep central vein which gives an illusion of thickness. These capitals bring to mind the large smooth leaf capitals of the Trondheim Octagon chapels more than the “cactus capital” of the portal, but the composition is the same, as is the origin of the type of capital. The only remains of the original Corinthian capital to be seen here is the circular core of the capital – like with all three capitals on the left side of the Octagon portal. Unlike Trondheim, the abaci are plain and large, ending in a profiled edge and the astragals are all moulded. Another difference with Trondheim is of course that at Noyon these capitals are detached, another difference is that none of the capitals at Noyon are decorated. One similarity in use is that at Noyon, like in Trondheim (and as we will see in other places), the smooth leaf capital has been used in the most important areas of the sanctuary. As we can see, there are several dissimilarities between Trondheim and Noyon, but the similarities – the type of capital, the capital’s composition and the use of it in the sanctuary are worth taking into consideration.

St. Remi, Reims

Another northern French example is the capitals of the choir at the basilica of St. Remi in Reims (Champagne-Ardenne) (c. 1162-1198).¹³³ Again we find the composition of two rows of leaves, four on the lower row and four on the upper row. The shape of the leaves are thick, curling down at the top, but unlike the “cactus capital” they stay close to the chalice and end in roundish, sometimes folded, tips (Fig. 27). The leaves are smooth, with only one central vein for decoration. It is unlikely that Reims is a source of inspiration for the “cactus capital”, but again, this does reflect the use of this type of capital in the north of France in the late twelfth century. Here too it is used in the choir ambulatory in a pilgrimage church.

As far as I can see, and in spite of the dissimilarities, Noyon and St. Remi are the two examples which come closest to the Trondheim “cactus capital” - both geographically and in

¹³³ <http://stremi-reims.cef.fr/basilique.html> Accessed November 2nd 2011.

terms of dating. There are many examples of other varieties of smooth leaf capitals in the north of France, but they tend to have tapering leaves ending in a scroll and the leaves are a much thinner variety than in Trondheim, like at Laon or St. Denis. A great deal of churches and cathedrals in the north of France have been destroyed and it is possible that the missing comparative material has disappeared with them.

5.6 Southern of France and northern Spain

In Southern France there was, in the Middle Ages, a group of four large pilgrimage churches, situated on the four routes of pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. Two of them still remain today – St. Foy de Conques (started c. 1030-1065) and St. Sernin de Toulouse (started c. 1070).¹³⁴ There is a fifth church in north-western Spain, Santiago de Compostela (started c. 1078), which was the end of the journey for the pilgrims.¹³⁵ The connection between them is location and architecture: They are all pilgrimage churches on the road to (or in) Compostela and they all share architectural features relating to the accommodation of large crowds of pilgrims.¹³⁶ The three remaining churches share certain decorative elements from this region, which later can be found in other parts of Europe, including Trondheim Cathedral. These are elements such as capitals decorated with acanthus leaves and pine cones, paired birds or lions - and the smooth leaf capital can be found in all three of them.¹³⁷

There are a lot of acanthus capitals both at St. Sernin and at Compostela. Marcel Durliat's view is that the use of the Corinthian capital seems to have been a very conscious choice at Compostela and the idea may have been to choose a traditionally prestigious decorative element for the Apostle James's cathedral. Here, like many other places, the smooth leaf capital and decorated leaf capitals were used together, to create a contrasting effect.¹³⁸ In addition, there are many smooth leaf capitals at Compostela and some are very similar the Trondheim "cactus capital" when it comes to composition, shape and thickness of the leaves (Fig.28). This is probably what Johan Meyer was referring to in his description of the Octagon portal.¹³⁹

¹³⁴ St. Martin de Tours and St. Martial de Limoges are the two churches which were later destroyed.

¹³⁵ Durliat, *La Sculpture Romane de la Route de Saint-Jacques*, 40.

¹³⁶ Durliat, *La Sculpture Romane de la Route de Saint-Jacques*, 40. They all have large transepts with aisles in prolongation with those of the nave, as well as an apse with ambulatory and radiating chapels.

¹³⁷ Durliat, *La Sculpture Romane de la Route de Saint-Jacques*, 65-70, 97, 317.

¹³⁸ All the information in this paragraph is based on Durliat, *La Sculpture Romane de la Route de Saint-Jacques*, 317.

¹³⁹ See Introduction: *Research History*.

We also find smooth leaf capitals in the choir of the abbey church of St. Sever (Aquitaine) one of the most important monasteries in Aquitaine and near one of the pilgrimage roads from France to Santiago de Compostela - the Via Lemovicensis.¹⁴⁰ The sculpture in the choir is considered to have been completed by 1100.¹⁴¹ Among the capitals of St. Sever, there is a group of smooth leaf capitals that is mainly situated in the side chapels on both sides of the choir and in the galleries in the northern part of the transept (Fig. 21).¹⁴² The type of smooth leaf capital found at St. Sever is similar to the Trondheim capital in several ways: The shape and thickness of the leaves come close, as well as the composition of some of the capitals, which all have two rows of leaves, some with four leaves in each row, some with eight. Seen in relation to the Trondheim capital, the St. Sever capitals are obviously of an earlier type, since they still retain elements of the original Corinthian capital - however one can see in the St. Sever capitals the earlier stages of the Trondheim capital.¹⁴³

I have several reasons for taking these earlier examples into consideration: Their use and placement in the sanctuary, the combination of acanthus/decorated leaf capitals and smooth leaf capitals and the similarities despite the distance in time. The “cactus capital” comes from this Southern-French/Northern-Spanish tradition, which flourished in the great churches on the Pilgrimage roads of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The use of the “cactus capital” and the smooth leaf capitals on the Octagon facade as well as inside the Octagon ambulatory testifies to the continuation of this tradition. The “cactus capital” has a decorated surface, but the other smooth leaf capitals of the Octagon may have been painted (possibly in an acanthus pattern) or left smooth to create a contrast with other painted or sculpted stonework. The actual style of the thick leaves as well as the capital’s composition seems to have continued in different versions in northern France and in England, but I have not been able to find a close predecessor to the “cactus capital”.

¹⁴⁰ <http://abbatiale.saint-sever.fr/htm/index.htm> Accessed November 2nd 2011.

¹⁴¹ Durliat, *La Sculpture Romane de la Route de Saint-Jacques*, 174.

¹⁴² Vergnolle, “Réflexions sur les chapiteaux à feuilles lisses...”, 184.

¹⁴³ St. Sever is situated in a region which produced and exported capitals of Pyrenean marble to other parts of France (even as far north as Paris) for a long period, from Merovingian times to the beginning of the High Middle Ages. The smooth leaf capitals of St. Sever were most likely produced during one of many periods of renaissance of the Corinthian capital in Europe, from the early 11th century in the Carolingian Empire, Northern Italy and Loire-area to Provence, the Rhône valley and Burgundy in the 13th century, via Toulouse and Anzy-le-Duc around 1100. According to the research of Eliane Vergnolle, the inspiration at St. Sever seems to have been a reinterpretation of local and other models from late Antiquity rather than influences from another artistic centre. The interpretation is in many cases quite free, resulting in types of capitals that are in some ways close to, and in other ways far removed from, the Roman original. In Vergnolle’s opinion, the capital sculpture at St. Sever was quite experimental and did not have much influence outside the local region. Vergnolle, “Réflexions sur les chapiteaux à feuilles lisses...”, 189-197.

6. *The capitals: The foliate capitals on the portal's left side*

6.1 The foliate capitals

The two other capitals on the left hand side of the Octagon portal are foliate capitals, with intertwining stems, leaves and fruits, and with corner leaves ending in crockets (Fig. 20 and Fig. 29). They have the same type of foliage, but a slightly different composition. As we can see from the pre-restoration photo, both capitals have been heavily restored (Fig. 4). We get an even better impression of this if we take a look at the drawings made by architect Schirmer in the 1840's (Fig. 30). The lower part of the capital in the middle is composed of thin plant stems ending in five-lobed leaves. Most of these leaves were missing and have been restored. However, the two lower leaves to the extreme right must be two of the few leaves on this capital which are original and intact. Higher up on the capital there are three leafy crockets which curl outwards and some of them carry berry clusters or bunches of grapes. From looking at the older drawing and photograph we see that these crockets were missing before the restoration.

On the left hand side, one leaf stretches across to meet the thick leaf of the "cactus capital" next to it. The top half of this leaf has been restored, but the lower half is clearly original. All in all, what remains from the original leaves indicates a rounded, five-lobed leaf with one deep central vein made by a groove and several thin, protruding veins on the leaf's surface, indicating the shape of each lobe. The base of the leaf is marked with a tiny twirl on each side of the stem and when this leaf is folded, it has the same thin veins on the outside. (Fig 31 and fig. 32).¹⁴⁴ The same five-lobed leaf appears on the portal's right hand side, on a small foliate capital between the man and ape-capital and the eagle (Fig. 33). In addition, we find it several places inside the Octagon.¹⁴⁵ We shall need to keep the shape and characteristics of this leaf in mind.

Returning to the portal's left hand side, the capital to the right has a slightly more elaborate composition, which consists of intertwining stems, two ending in a folded leaf and

¹⁴⁴ The two original leaves on the base of the capital are quite worn, and any trace of twirls at the base of the leaf is hard to find.

¹⁴⁵ It also appears on one of the window capitals on the Octagon exterior (for ill. see NDR Archives photo no. 164) and on some of the capitals and corbels of the Octagon ambulatory (the four corner capitals of the ambulatory and some of the

two ending in a leafy volute, one carrying a fruit and one not. This capital has one very tall central leaf and what looks like the remains of two corner leaves, all three ending in leafy crockets and the central leaf carrying a fruit (Fig. 34). The outline of a tall central leaf and two smaller corner leaves is also present on the capital in the middle, although the central leaf here seems less prominent. This could of course be a result of the restoration. If we look at Schirmer's drawing, this shows a few more leaves in place as well as a more prominent central leaf on the capital to the right (Fig 30). Another difference between the two capitals is that some of the stems of the capital to the right are decorated with a simple pattern. Both capitals have tips of small, flat (possibly acanthus) leaves sticking up at the base, between the plant stems (Fig. 31 and Fig. 34). This too is a feature to bear in mind.

6.2 Comparative material: Crocket capitals and intertwining stems

The composition of one large central leaf and smaller corner leaves is a very common composition in early Gothic capital sculpture and can be found on certain capitals in the ambulatory of Saint-Denis (1141) and in the first Gothic crockets in Notre-Dame de Paris (1163-1177).¹⁴⁶ During the period 1170's- 1220's this type of central leaf in Île-de France generally has 4-7 ribs starting immediately above the astragal.¹⁴⁷ This is what we have in Trondheim too. On the capital to the extreme right we can count at least four ribs on the central leaf. Unfortunately this is quite a wide dating, but at least it corresponds to what we know is likely for the Octagon portal.

The intertwining stems on the two foliate capitals' chalices are much harder to pinpoint. French foliage does not sport much in terms of stems or stalks at all until early in the thirteenth century and even then they are short and do not intersect much.¹⁴⁸ It is also difficult to find parallels in England, although there is the Anglo-Saxon tradition of interlacing foliage and some twelfth century examples of interlacing stems which may or may not be influenced by this.¹⁴⁹ I have not been able to find any good examples of the

capitals on window level, between the stained glass windows in the ambulatory. It can also be found on a capital in the south transept west triforium, for illustration, see Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 133.

¹⁴⁶ Denise Jalabert, *La flore sculptée des monuments du Moyen Age en France*, (Paris: Editions A & J Picard & Cie., 1965), plate 60 B.

¹⁴⁷ John James, *The Creation of Gothic Architecture, An Illustrated Thesaurus. Ark of God: The evolution of Foliate capitals in the Paris Basin 1170 to 1250*. Vol 1, (West Grinstead Publishing: Hartley Vale, Australia, 2002), 30.

¹⁴⁸ James, *The Creation of Gothic Architecture*, 28, 797.

¹⁴⁹ Lawrence Stone, *Sculpture in Britain: The Middle Ages*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1955), 102, 248 (note 26). Stone's example of twining stalks in the presbytery capitals of Oxford Cathedral c. 1181. "The criss-cross pattern of long stalks goes back to Anglo-Saxon sculpture in All Hallows, Barking and Sompting, Sussex. It was revived in the late 1130's

combination “large corner leaves and crossing stems and leaves on the capital’s chalice” in England or in France. The closest example in England is probably the capitals at Lichfield Cathedral (Staffordshire, West-Midlands) (c.1200), where we have similar intertwining stems (Fig. 35).¹⁵⁰ Another parallel I have found to the crossing stems of the Octagon portal is not from architecture but from the interlacing branches of a relief from Durham (from the third quarter of the twelfth century) (Fig 36).¹⁵¹ This again seems to be influenced by painting. The similarity between this and the Trondheim capitals is not great, but what I find interesting is the symmetrical and interlacing pattern of the branches of the trees on the Durham relief – something which is often found in twelfth century manuscript illumination – and which is also present in the pattern of the stems of the two foliate Trondheim capitals. This possible link between painting and architectural sculpture is something I would like to continue to explore as we continue to look at the Octagon portal’s sculpture.

6.3 The five-lobed leaf

The actual leaf of the intersecting stems, the generalized five-lobed leaf, is not unusual for the last few decades of the twelfth century, especially in northern France but also certain places in England.¹⁵²

Canterbury and St.Mary’s Abbey, York

This type of foliage appears on the capitals of Canterbury Cathedral’s Corona (1177-1178), where there is a multitude of rounded, five-lobed, deeply carved leaves, which develop into crockets at the corners – often with clusters of berries – and often with a flat leaf on top of the crocket (Fig. 37). Christopher Norton has pointed out this similarity with Trondheim’s Octagon and its portal, without suggesting a direct influence.¹⁵³ It is true that the actual type of foliage is very close, but I have not been able to find the same delicate swirls on the Canterbury leaf. Also, the Canterbury leaves generally have a much wider stalk than the Octagon portal’s leaves. In addition, as Norton says, the arrangement of stems and leaves is much more fluid and organic in Trondheim. The comparison is absolutely valid when it

on a capital at Steyning, Sussex and now again at Oxford.” This foliage consists of small trefoil leaves on stalks, much shorter and only sometimes crossing and is not relevant here.

¹⁵⁰ I am very much indebted to Malcolm Thurlby for helping me with this information and for the photo.

¹⁵¹ Stone, *Sculpture in Britain*, 64.

¹⁵² Jalabert . *La Flore sculptée*..., 97.

¹⁵³ Christopher B. Norton, Stuart Harrison, “The Octagon”, 65-66

comes to the crocket capitals of the Octagon's window capitals, but as we have seen it is difficult to say much about the composition of the upper level of the Octagon portal's capitals because of the state they were in before the restoration. There is no trace of the foliate crockets with the flat leaf on top and clusters of berries on Schirmer's drawings from 1859 or on the photograph from before the restoration (Fig. 30 and fig. 4).¹⁵⁴

Norton also points out the unusual arrangement of alternating short and long shafts and the fact that the capital sculpture merges into one unit. This arrangement can be paralleled at Canterbury cathedral, in the eastern crossing piers (1177-1178) (Fig. 38).¹⁵⁵ Norton does not propose that there is a direct link between the Canterbury and Trondheim capital arrangement or foliage, but argues that there could be a lost intermediary, perhaps St. Mary's Abbey in York.¹⁵⁶ I have looked at the examples from St. Mary's Abbey which Norton proposes, dated to before 1190.¹⁵⁷ Looking at these examples, we see that the foliage is not exactly the same, but that there are some similarities (Fig 39 and Fig. 40): Both the York capitals and the Trondheim capitals have a small central leaf at the base, but at York this is a tri-lobed leaf, sometimes connected to the larger leaves on either side, whereas in Trondheim this leaf is isolated and semicircular with ribs, almost like a miniature version of the capitals' large central leaves. Like in Trondheim, there are five-lobed leaves on the York capitals too, but the lobes seem to be more concave than the Trondheim leaves, which seem flatter. In addition, the five-lobed leaves on the York chapter house capitals completely lack the tight twirls at the base of the leaf. However, there does seem to be a hint of a twirl at the base of both the large leaf and the small-tri-lobed leaf on the other York capital, but this is difficult to see from the photographic material available. As far as I can see there are no intertwining stems or stalks on the York capitals. Christopher Wilson's dating of the York capitals to before 1190 is in part based on the stalks growing out of the lower parts of the central spines of the crockets, each with a multi-lobed leaf, which is something that occurs in

¹⁵⁴ The scrolls with a flat leaf placed on top can however be found in the west triforium of Trondheim Cathedral's transept. Here we find the five-lobed leaf with the twirl at the base too. See ill. in Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 133.

¹⁵⁵ Norton and Harrison, "The Octagon", 65-66.

¹⁵⁶ Norton gives as examples the following illustrations from St. Mary's Abbey: *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments of the City of York*, Vol IV: Outside of the city walls, East of the Ouse, Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, England, 1975, pl 29f right and g right; Christopher Wilson, "The Original Setting of the Apostle and Prophet Figures from St. Mary's Abbey, York" in *Studies in Medieval Sculpture*, ed. F.H. Thompson, (London: The Society of Antiquaries of London, 1983), 104, pl XLI.

¹⁵⁷ Christopher Wilson, "The Original Setting of the Apostle and Prophet Figures from St. Mary's Abbey, York" in *Studies in Medieval Sculpture*, ed. F.H. Thompson, (London: The Society of Antiquaries of London, 1983), 103.

most of the Canterbury capitals as well as in the York capitals. This feature does not occur at Trondheim at all.

All in all, the surviving capitals from St. Mary's Abbey have foliage which shares some stylistic features with the Octagon portals' foliage, but in my opinion it does not seem to be enough for St. Mary's Abbey to be the missing intermediary between Canterbury and Trondheim. St Mary's Abbey and Canterbury cathedral are the only two places in northern England where this type of foliage – crocket capitals interspersed with multi-lobed leaves – occurs.¹⁵⁸ This in itself could be an indication that the Trondheim capitals were influenced by this. However, I feel that the lack of stylistic evidence speaks against this theory and that we must look elsewhere.¹⁵⁹ The occurrence of this type of foliage in all three places could perhaps mean that they are not too far removed in time and that the 1180's-1190's is perhaps not unlikely for the foliate capitals of the Octagon portal.

Northern France

I have not been able to find an exact match to the Octagon portal's five-lobed leaf (this does of course not mean that it does not or did not exist). There are however many examples which come close when it comes to the shape of the leaf, the number of lobes and the veins, especially in the north of France. The examples which, in my opinion, are most relevant to Trondheim are all from the north east of France and can be dated to the 1170-1180's. The features I have been focusing on are: Number of lobes (anything between five and ten seems relevant, since the number of lobes of this generalized type of leaf could easily be adapted), veins, central nerve and twirls at the base.

At St. Leu d'Esserent (Picardy), the ambulatory piers (c.1180's) have crocket capitals with multi-lobed leaves which have a slight twirl at the base – although not as tight a twirl as in Trondheim and the leaves are mostly larger, with a different treatment of the central vein (Fig. 41).¹⁶⁰ At Gonesse (Île-de France), just north-east of Paris, many of the leaves of the choir gallery (dated mid- to late 1180's) have a twirl at the base (Fig. 42).¹⁶¹ Here too, the treatment of the rest of the leaf is different from Trondheim and, not surprisingly, quite close to the St. Leu-style. Finally, we do perhaps come closest at the cathedral of Noyon (Picardy)

¹⁵⁸ Wilson, "The Original Setting of the Apostle and Prophet Figures from St. Mary's Abbey, York", 103.

¹⁵⁹ Unfortunately I have only had access to the mentioned examples from St. Mary's Abbey, and there may of course be other examples outside my knowledge which are closer to the Octagon portal's foliage.

¹⁶⁰ James, *The Creation of Gothic Architecture*, 468.

where, in the capitals of the nave aisle (c. 1180's), we have a flat, multi-lobed leaf with a small twirl at the base, veined lobes and a deep central vein (Fig. 43), as well as the folded version of the same leaf.¹⁶² The leaves here have between five and ten lobes. The stalks are however much thicker here than in Trondheim, and decorated with a double groove. In some instances the twirl here involves a bulging of the lower part of the leaf, which also seems to be the case in some instances in the Trondheim capitals. My impression from this is that the Trondheim leaf is closer stylistically to leaves in certain monuments in the north of France than to anything that can be found in England in the same period. This does not necessarily mean that artists from Noyon or Gonesse must have worked in Trondheim – but we will return to the possible origin of the workers later.

6.4 The shape of the foliate capitals

The three capitals on the Octagon portal's left side all share the tall, slim neck and the wide top. This shape can also be found in capitals at the Wells Cathedral in the nave and west side of the transept, dating from ca 1220 (Fig. 44).¹⁶³ Although the shape of the Wells capital is very similar to the Trondheim capitals, the foliage is different (stiff-leaf crockets) and the neck of the capital is smooth. This style of capital does however reflect the influence from the typical Norman capital from the first quarter of the thirteenth century.¹⁶⁴

This shape sets the foliate capitals of the Octagon portal apart from the other capitals of the Octagon facade. The few remaining original leaves on the portal's capitals also seem to be more finely carved than many of the other foliate capitals' leaves, of which only a few have the twirl at the base of the leaf.¹⁶⁵ The occurrence of the five-lobed leaf with the twirl both on the portal's capitals and inside the Octagon ambulatory speaks in favour of the portal's capitals being contemporary with the rest of the Octagon, or at least with the lower parts of the Octagon ambulatory and some of the window capitals (external and internal). However, the inverted bell shape is unique, representing a type of capital which found its main use in the beginning of the thirteenth century.

¹⁶¹ James, *The Creation of Gothic Architecture*, 380.

¹⁶² James, *The Creation of Gothic Architecture* 437.

¹⁶³ Arthur Gardner, *English Medieval Sculpture*, (New York: Hacker Art Books 1973), 95.

¹⁶⁴ Jalabert, *La flore sculptée*, 105-106. The typical Norman capital has a characteristic curve, is very tall compared to its width and has a circular abacus with a deep hollow underneath a strongly protruding circular moulding.

¹⁶⁵ The Octagon portal's capitals seem to have slightly more in common with the window capitals than with the ambulatory capitals – see detail of leaf on portal (Fig 32) and Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, p 145. Both on the window capitals and

7. *The capitals: The historiated capitals on the portal's right side*

7.1 **The man and the ape**

The three columns on the right side of the portal have capitals which, unlike on the left side, merge completely and constitute a single visual unit (Fig. 45, 46 and 47). The capital to the extreme left continues the theme of intertwining stems and leaves, with the addition of two figures in the foliage: A naked man and an ape (Fig. 48). The man is hanging on to a branch and is staring out at us with pupils marked by drilled holes. One hand and his torso are preserved, but the other arm and most of both legs are missing. He is completely naked and the contours of his genitals can be clearly made out. The wideness of the lower half of his face could mean that he once had a beard or perhaps just wide, grinning mouth. Together with his very short, stubby legs this could, in my opinion, indicate that he is based on the depiction of a satyr. I will be returning to this shortly.

The ape on the other side of the capital is quite damaged. It is crouching and what could be its right arm is reaching for something that once was on the branch above its head – most likely a fruit (Fig. 49).

It is difficult to find relevant comparative material for this capital in sculpture elsewhere. The shape of the capital is the same inverted bell-shape as the other foliate capitals of the Octagon, but square - not circular, as most of the window capitals or the ambulatory capitals are. This capital form dates from a slightly earlier period than the circular capitals of the facade and the bouquet-shaped capitals of the portal's left side.¹⁶⁶

The foliage of the man-and-ape capital, as well as the small foliate capital next to it, is partly the same as on the capitals on the left side of the portal, with stems of leaves with five or more lobes. On the man-and-ape capital some leaves are folded, some are longer and seven-lobed, some are even tri-lobed and some stems end in fruits – a bunch of grapes and a pine cone can be discerned on the left side of the capital and another pine cone on the right. A new feature here is a coarser leaf reminiscent of oak leaves (Fig. 50 and Fig. 51). The variation in the foliage on this capital corresponds with the experimental attitude of the

on the ambulatory capitals, the crockets with leaves on top are very different from the Canterbury ones, with big curls on the sides and several leaves along the crocket.

¹⁶⁶ Paley, *A Manual of Gothic Mouldings*, 54.

1180's and the increasing diversity of the 1190's in Northern French foliage.¹⁶⁷ The short folded leaves facing each other at the base of this capital can also be found inside the Octagon ambulatory – another indication of the dating.¹⁶⁸

The pattern of the intertwining stems is essentially the same as on the capital to the extreme right on the opposite side of the portal, but here the pattern starts further down on the plant stem and the two central stems seem to join at the top, unlike the capital on the other side, where they both turn into folded leaves (compare fig. 34 and fig. 48). Like the capitals on the left side, these intertwining stems seem to have their origin in the decorative foliage of manuscript illumination.

I have decided to look into the capital's iconographical aspects, to see if this can provide some more information. From an iconographical point of view, this capital enters into the tradition of Romanesque capitals with men picking grapes in "the vineyard of the Lord" or men and apes entangled in foliage, as both Peter Anker and Margrete Syrstad Andås have argued.¹⁶⁹ Fischer too relates this capital to this tradition, saying that "the two little men climbing around in the foliage and perhaps harvesting grapes" are paralleled in a capital in the cloister walk of Monréale Cathedral (Sicily) (1174-1185) (Fig 52).¹⁷⁰ This is true, both the shape and position of the legs and the frontal nudity is the same, although the little man in the Trondheim capital sports an obvious erection, whereas the genitals of the Monréale men are much more discreet, and the treatment of the face and eyes is completely different. The man on the Trondheim capital is not entangled or trapped in the foliage – he is climbing or sitting in it, and so is the ape, - nor is he harvesting grapes, although the ape does seem to be reaching for something.¹⁷¹

The link to Monréale is not necessarily as exotic as it may sound. Carl D. Sheppard has successfully argued, on stylistic grounds, that the Monréale cloister capitals must have been carved by artists with a background from Île-de-France, more specifically somebody with a close knowledge of the Royal Portal (1145-1155) of Chartres Cathedral.¹⁷² When it

¹⁶⁷ James, *The Creation of Gothic Architecture*, 24.

¹⁶⁸ See illustration in Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 156.

¹⁶⁹ Anker, "Høymiddelalderens skulptur i stein og tre", 162-163; Andås, "The Octagon Doorway", 118.

¹⁷⁰ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 140.

¹⁷¹ There is of course a possibility that there once were grapes on the missing parts of foliage and that the little man was reaching for them with his now missing arm. The "fruits" above the man and the ape's heads are not pine cones, but there is a small cluster of grapes on the extreme left of this capital, which seems to be part of the foliage in which the man is sitting.

¹⁷² Carl D. Sheppard jr., "Monreale and Chartres", *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, XXXIV, (1949): 409

comes to iconography, the Monréale capitals display a variety of Classical, Byzantine, Arabic and Northern French designs, not synthesized but existing side by side - and the harvesting of the vine is an ancient Classical motif.¹⁷³

Another relevant type of naked male figure in foliage is in my opinion the satyrs and centaurs of the Carolingian ivory carvings on St. Peter's cathedra (Fig. 53). Here, the satyr is standing in the foliage, not trapped by it, but supporting himself on it and grabbing the surrounding stems. He is frontal and naked, genitals visible, but unlike the Trondheim capital he has horns and hooved feet, like the Classical satyr. I do not mean by this that there is any direct link between these ivory carvings and the capital in Trondheim, but these carvings were very likely influenced by Byzantine or Byzantine-inspired Carolingian manuscript illumination, which again brings us to the relationship between painting and sculpture.¹⁷⁴ As in the Carolingian period, Western art at end of the twelfth century was strongly influenced by Byzantine art and perhaps even more by the Byzantine style than anything else and not only did the Western artists copy the style of draperies, figures and faces but they seem to have done this by picking and mixing different parts of different compositions.¹⁷⁵

The crouching, tailed ape, often holding or eating a piece of fruit, is a type of ape which is frequently found in Classical art, but less so in Western medieval art.¹⁷⁶ However, in Byzantine art this type seems to have coexisted alongside the more well known iconographic tradition of the ape as the *Figura Diaboli*, without the two influencing each other.¹⁷⁷ The ape in Trondheim is not holding or eating fruit, but seems to be reaching for something above its head.

Could this be a satyr and an ape? The satyr and ape do exist as an iconographic group which originated in late Classical illustrated versions of a manuscript by Aelian, where the ape is placed next to a horned goat-footed satyr.¹⁷⁸ Several examples exist, among them two English Romanesque Bestiaries, almost identical and both dating from the second quarter of the thirteenth century (Fig. 54).¹⁷⁹ The satyr in this iconographic group is a confusion of two

¹⁷³ Carl D. Sheppard jr., "Iconography of the Cloister of Monreale", *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (Sep. 1949): 160.

¹⁷⁴ Kurt Weitzmann, *Art in the Medieval West and its Contacts with Byzantium*, (London: Variorum Reprints, 1982), 23.

¹⁷⁵ Weitzmann, *Art in the Medieval West*, 23.

¹⁷⁶ H.W. Janson, *Apes and Ape Lore in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, (London: The Warburg Institute, 1952), 44.

¹⁷⁷ Janson, *Apes and Ape Lore*, 45.

¹⁷⁸ Janson, *Apes and Ape Lore*, 330.

¹⁷⁹ Oxford Bodl. 764, f17v and Brit. Mus. Harl. 4751, f11v. The group also appears in the Stuttgart Psalter (c. 850): Solinus, *Collectanea...*, ed Th. Mommsen, Berlin, 1864, no. 27, 55ff and in Milan, Ambrosiana, cod. C. 246 inf., f. 37r (from the thirteenth century but reflecting an earlier prototype).

creatures - the ancient satyr and a type of ape referred to as "satyri" in the bestiaries.¹⁸⁰ The satyr was considered a hybrid creature by Christian writers, a kind of demon and not the same as an ape, who was considered man's "poor relation" or *similitudines*, and who was used as a contrast to man in religious writing, generally representing various aspects of sin.¹⁸¹ However the combination of the satyr and ape in these manuscripts seems to have been used in those rare instances when the illuminator wanted to suggest that there was more than one kind of ape, without having to depict all five kinds as originally described by Solinus.¹⁸² Could it be that the depiction on the Trondheim capital too is based on such a representation?

In the British Museum Harley manuscript, the satyr can easily be confused with a man – he has no horns, only a tail and a beard and very wide thighs. He does not have any visible genitals. The ape is similarly built, with a long mane of hair and a pointed snout. The Oxford manuscript is almost identical in its depiction of the man and monkey. Andås' interpretation is that this is a male exhibitionist and an ape.¹⁸³ The iconographic meaning would in essence be more or less the same whether we have a male exhibitionist and an ape or a satyr and an ape – both combinations represent the danger of sin, but the satyr-ape combination indicates more of a concern with the demoniac aspects of hybrid creatures in addition to the general sinfulness of the apes – a sort of representation of everything that man is not (or should not be).

The fact that the man has drilled holes for pupils could be of importance since he is the only character of the Octagon portal's sculptural decoration to have this feature (the ape's eyes are not intact, but as we will see the eyes of the other characters have been given a different treatment). From the middle of the twelfth century onwards, the drilled pupil seems to have taken on an iconographic meaning and to represent an aspect of evil, at least in French cathedral sculpture and this did not change until approximately a century later.¹⁸⁴

Andås dates this capital to the beginning of the 1200's, arguing that an exhibitionist placed inside the foliage is typical for this type of imagery on the Continent in the Gothic

¹⁸⁰ Janson, *Apes and Ape Lore*, 348 note 18. Rudolf Wittkower uses the Milan manuscript as an example and states in his article "Marvels of the East", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, V, 1942, pp 172, 191, pl. 48a that the ape and satyr combination must be inspired by Alexandrian compositions from the 6th century, but Janson argues that the Stuttgart and Milan versions are quite different from each other and seem to represent a Western and an Eastern tradition, both based on a lost Classical model.

¹⁸¹ Janson, *Apes and Ape Lore*, 74.

¹⁸² Janson, *Apes and Ape Lore*, 15.

¹⁸³ Andås, "The Octagon Doorway: A Question of Purity and Danger?", 100, 116.

period and she sees it as most likely that this motif reached Trondheim from England.¹⁸⁵ This supports the idea that the motif could be coming from English manuscripts and in my opinion it is not unlikely that the Trondheim capital could be based such a representation, whether the character in the foliage is a man or a satyr. I have chosen to include this iconographic information in my otherwise style-focused discussion because I find it relevant as an indication of the origin of the motif. As the figures of this capital are quite damaged, this is one of the few points I have to navigate by.

To sum up for the man and ape-capital, the capital's shape and foliage point to the 1180's -1190's, whereas the motif shows indications of being influenced by Byzantine-inspired depictions of satyrs and ape and by the Classical harvesting of the vine – both found in painting and sculpture in the period from the last decades of the twelfth century to the first decades of the thirteenth century.

The small capital capping the shaft next to the man-and-ape capital consists of two rows – the lower of five-lobed leaves of the same type as on the foliate capitals on the other side of the portal and the upper of one tri-lobed leaf only. Two folded leaves curl against each other on the left side of the bottom row and a decorated border crowns the astragal (Fig 34).

7.2 The birds and the lions

The two next capitals have to be treated as one. They have ceased to be individual capitals as such and appear as more of a sculpture group. First there is a frontal, standing bird with its head missing and its wings outstretched, then a standing lion holding a grinning mask by its ear. Both the lion and the bird are repeated on the other side of the mask (Fig. 45, 46 and fig. 47).

The bird has finely carved feathers and its feet are gripping the astragal. A new type of foliage encircles the bird: Coming out from between its legs are two stems which join at the front of the bird's chest and then spread out again into two leaves (Fig.55). What looks like the remains of a bunch of grapes or a pine cone sits in the middle of this arrangement, on the bird's chest. Something that could be the continuation of the leaves or perhaps two new stems, continue up towards the back of the bird's head. A similar pattern, although not in an

¹⁸⁴ Hauglid, *Romanske konsollfriser*, 70.

identical execution, can be found on the arch of Trondheim Cathedral's Royal Entrance which is thought to be dating from the early thirteenth century (Fig.56).¹⁸⁶ There is no foliage on the bird on the opposite side.

The thickness of the legs and the frontal position makes it tempting to describe these birds as eagles, but this is far from certain as the heads are missing and birds were often given a general representation in this period. The feathers on the legs of bird on the left side end higher up and give an impression of longer and thinner legs than on the bird on the right, but otherwise they are very similar. Each feather has a thin trait down the middle, with several even thinner traits radiating diagonally from the centre. The treatment of the individual feathers and the pattern of the short feathers on top of the wings and long feathers further down are quite common in both sculpture and painting in this period and it is hard to say which could have inspired the birds of these capitals. The frontal eagle is an ancient Oriental symbol, much used in European medieval heraldry, but also in metal work such as "eagle lecterns".¹⁸⁷ These were bronze book stands in the shape of an eagle, pelican or griffin, originally produced in the Meuse district (now Belgium).¹⁸⁸

As we have seen, the bird to the left of the mask has a pine cone or a bunch of grapes on its chest – or possibly an arum flower.¹⁸⁹ There are numerous examples of the arum being used in the architectural sculpture of northern France the eleventh and twelfth centuries.¹⁹⁰ Birds are often depicted picking at arums, but they are also often shown picking at grapes and the two can be hard to distinguish.

Next to the bird stands a lion on its hind legs, its head turned back in order to bite the ear of the mask next to it. The lion's foot is still standing on the astragal, but it has lost most of its leg as well as its tail. The lion's paws are clawing at the bird's wing – the animal's right paw higher up than its left paw and twisted in a position that seems physically impossible. Its mane is made up by a group of small, textured balls and, unlike the man in the foliage, the eyes seem to not be drilled holes, but made by a circular indentation. I will

¹⁸⁵ Margrete Syrstad Andås, "Hvor marginal er marginen? Om blottene i sentrum og konger i periferien." in *Bilder i marginalen: Nordiska studier i medeltidens kunst*, ed. Kersti Markus (Tallinn: Argo, 2006), 146-147.

¹⁸⁶ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 241; Ekroll, *Med kleber og kalk*, 154.

¹⁸⁷ I would like to thank Margrethe C. Stang and Margrete Syrstad Andås for drawing my attention to the eagle lecterns.

¹⁸⁸ Encyclopedia Britannica s.v. "medieval metalwork" (accessed October 17th 2011)

¹⁸⁹ <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/377708/metalwork/73996/Europe-from-the-Middle-Ages?anchor=ref600642>

¹⁹⁰ Jalabert, *La Flore sculptée*, 55. Originally a Sassanide decorative element, the arum was often used as a decorative element in French (Toulousan) illuminated manuscripts in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and was thus imported into sculpture.

return to the mask shortly, but on the other side of the mask there is a second lion – similar to the first one, except for the treatment of the mane and the position of the paws. Instead of balls, this mane consists of textured tongues and the position of the paws is inverted – here the lion’s right paw again is clawing higher than the left, which makes a contrasting effect since it is facing the opposite direction. Again we see the subtle symmetry and variation from the other capitals. This lion is missing even more of its hind legs. Both lions have erect genitals, intact on the lion to the left and damaged on the lion to the right (Fig.57), which is an unusual trait in sculpture as well as painting. I will return to this shortly.

A lion’s mane made by round balls or curls is also unusual.¹⁹¹ The treatment of the other lion’s mane is much more conventional, again with reference to both sculpture and painting. The bestiaries say that there are two kinds of lions: The short ones with curly manes are peaceful and the long ones with smooth hair are fierce.¹⁹² It is possible that this is a reference to the bestiaries, but in this case it seems just as likely that it was done for the sake of variation in an otherwise very symmetrical composition.

Heraldry

The heraldic aspect of the figure composition on the portal’s right side has been mentioned by both Larsen and Fischer.¹⁹³

Heraldry first came into use on seals in the early twelfth century and was well established in both in England and other parts of Europe by the end of the century.¹⁹⁴ Heraldry on arms rapidly followed and also seems to have been fairly well developed by 1200.¹⁹⁵ It was first used by families of nobility, but abbots and bishops too used heraldic arms in their seals from the twelfth century onwards.¹⁹⁶

The position of the lions of the Octagon portal have an equivalent in heraldry: They are *rampant regardant*, i.e. standing on their hind legs, looking back. Many depictions of

¹⁹⁰ Jalabert, *La Flore sculptée*, 94, plate 56. Influenced by Toulousan sculpture, both the west portal of the abbey church of St. Denis and the Royal Portal at Chartres incorporate it.

¹⁹¹ An examination of the images of lions from various bestiaries show hardly any with this style of mane. www.bestiary.ca (accessed October 29th 2011).

¹⁹² Richard Barber, trans., *Bestiary: Being an English version of the Bodleian Library, Oxford MS Bodley 764*, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1992), 23.

¹⁹³ See Introduction: *Research History*

¹⁹⁴ Anthony R. Wagner, *Heralds and heraldry in the Middle Ages*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), 15. Other parts of Europe where heraldry can be documented in the first half of the 12th century are Savoy, Saxony, Provence, Arragon, and Tuscany.

¹⁹⁵ Wagner, *Heralds and heraldry in the Middle Ages*, 18.

¹⁹⁶ Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, s.v. “Heraldry”, www.britannica.com/heraldry (Accessed September 7th, 2011).

lions in painting and sculpture have the lion as rampant, but *regardant* as well is more unusual. This does not have to have been inspired directly by heraldry, because this type of double composition with two animals facing each other is ancient in the Orient and also exists on Byzantine silks, which were imported into Europe. However, these two lions have erect genitals, something which is unusual in sculpture and painting, but which was a distinct feature in heraldry.¹⁹⁷ Now, the lion *rampant* towards the end of the twelfth century appears to have been the heraldic insignia of, not the English king, whose lions were *passant* (and only depicted as *rampant* when there was a lack of space), but of the Scottish king William I.¹⁹⁸ This may be a far-fetched connection but in my opinion it is interesting in terms of where the influence could have come from, especially since buildings in the north of England have already been mentioned as a likely source of inspiration for some elements of the Octagon portal.

7.3 The mask

The eyes of the mask are staring, but do not have drilled pupils like those of the little man in the foliage. They are marked by a circular indentation and both the inferior and superior eyelids are clearly defined, as are the eyeballs. The face is lined from the corners of the eyes and down along the cheeks. The eyebrows are very low and pulled together in a crease across the bridge of the nose, in what can only be described as an agonized expression. The wide, gaping mouth has something coming out of it which could be foliage, snakes or the lions' tails. On Schirmer's drawing from the nineteenth century, it does look like the tips of the lions' tails are coming out of the mask's mouth, possibly together with some large leaves, but this would make no sense unless it is a purely decorative device (Fig. 30). The mask has very large ears and, looking at older photos, we see that the mask has a marked hairline and what looks like hair on both sides, marked with vertical striations (Fig. 58). The foliage on top of the head is the same as we have seen before on the left side of the portal – a veined five-lobed leaf with twirls at the base and thick stems with a thin edge.

¹⁹⁷ "In this respect it is interesting to note that in earlier days, before mock modesty and prudery had become such prominent features of our national life, the genital organ was always represented of a pronounced size in a prominent position, and it was as much a matter of course to paint it gules as it now is to depict the tongue of that colour. To prevent error I had better add that this is not now the usual practice." Arthur Charles Fox-Davis, *A complete guide to Heraldry* (New York: Dodge Pub.Co., 1909), 187.

¹⁹⁸ "William, King of Scotland, having chosen for his armorial bearing a Red Lion *rampant*, acquired the name of William the Lion; and this rampant lion still constitutes the arms of Scotland; and the president of the heraldic court ... is called

This mask has elements of the so called *Green Man*-tradition or leaf masks, with its staring eyes, wide mouth and foliage on top of its head - and possibly also coming out of its mouth.¹⁹⁹ The *Green Man* is based on depictions in Roman art, but can be found in France, Germany and England in the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries as more demonic looking leaf masks.²⁰⁰ The lack of foliage on the face of the mask (except for possibly on the chin) shows that it corresponds to a early thirteenth century French sub-group of leaf masks known as *Masque Feuillu*, where the foliage only comes from mouth and nose and does not sprout from the face.²⁰¹ However, in my view, this mask is just as much related to the tradition of contorted faces of horror and fear in twelfth and thirteenth century painting and sculpture, possibly signifying damned souls or demons.²⁰² The shape of the wide mouth is reminiscent of medieval depictions of theatrical masks or of certain depictions of apes.²⁰³ One example of this is a double capital from the Toulouse region (mid-twelfth century) shows the face of a bearded man on one side and a grinning ape on the other side, both with foliage coming out of their mouths (Fig. 59). The ape has staring eyes, big ears, a wide mouth and a fringe of hair not unlike the mask of the Octagon portal. Both heads are flanked by two birds picking at grapes.

Although there are numerous examples of *Green Men* in English and French architectural sculpture and manuscript illumination, this mask is a combination of this and of the depiction of the tormented soul. One problem with the *Green Man* tradition is that the foliage coming from the mouth is usually much thicker than on our mask, where the foliage is almost non-existent. The realism of the mask, with the lined face, furrowed brows, the visible ears and the treatment of the eyes, with their clearly defined corners of the eyes, makes it stand out from the corbel heads of the Octagon as well as those of the choir.²⁰⁴ It may have more in common with the medallion heads of the Octagon façade, as Fischer also suggests, although the later dating of these heads makes this problematic.²⁰⁵ Lines on the forehead appear frequently in French cathedral sculpture from the 1200's onwards, but can

Lord Lion King-at-Arms." Walter Scott, *Tales of a Grandfather*, <http://www.walterscott.lib.ed.ac.uk/etexts/etexts/grandfather1.PDF>, ch. IV, 53. (Accessed September 7th, 2011).

¹⁹⁹ Kathleen Basford, *The Green Man*, (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1978), 9, 13, 15.

²⁰⁰ Basford, *The Green Man*, 9, 12.

²⁰¹ Basford, *The Green Man*, 15, ill. plate 29a and 30b.

²⁰² Nurith Keenan-Kedar, *Marginal Sculpture in Medieval France: Towards a Deciphering of an Enigmatic Pictorial Language*, (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1995), 58.

²⁰³ For an example of theatrical masks, see Charles T. Little, *Set in Stone: The face in medieval sculpture*, 8, fig. 10.

²⁰⁴ For illustrations of the Octagon corbel heads see Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 184-185; for the choir corbel heads see Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 224-225; Anker, "Høymiddelalderens skulptur i stein og tre", 162-163.

be found as early as the 1140's-1150's.²⁰⁶ The combination of the lined face and the furrowed brow here is perhaps an indication that this mask is closer to the 1200's than the 1150's in time. A parallel can be found at Jedburgh Abbey's (Scottish Borders) west portal (c.1180's), where there is a brooding mask with a lined face among foliage and facing birds. The mask is quite weathered and it is difficult to see if there is any foliage on its face (Fig. 60).²⁰⁷

What we can say is that this mask seems to be a combination of the French *masque feuillu*-type and the tormented soul-depiction and that this, combined with the lined and expressive face, indicates a date sometime around 1180-1200, especially seen in connection with the foliage on top of the mask and on the surrounding capitals.

7.4 The dragon

The dragon on the extreme right on the Octagon portal's right side has been considerably damaged (Fig. 47). It is missing its head and most of its feet and only the body and long, twisting tail remain. The position of the bird could mean that the dragon was attacking its leg, as it seems to be stretched slightly in the direction of the dragon.²⁰⁸ The wings of the dragon have been given the same treatment of the feathers as the two birds, with short feathers on the top of the wing, then longer and pointed feathers, all marked by fine incisions. Along the dragon's body and tail runs a band decorated with beading. Its two feet seem to have ended in claws. Fine lines emphasize the movement and softness of the underbelly.

Again I am tempted to compare with manuscript illumination. All these features occur in twelfth century English painted depictions of dragons (Fig. 61).²⁰⁹ Here we have the same two-legged dragon with the same wings and a twisting tail - even the beading and the folds on the belly are the same. As we know, English sculpture towards the end of the twelfth century and in the beginning of the thirteenth century was strongly influenced by manuscript illumination, especially the classicizing tendencies of the Byzantine style.²¹⁰ Manuscript models were reduced in size or enlarged with great ease in order to be translated into other

²⁰⁵ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim* 140.

²⁰⁶ Little, *Set in stone*, for the 1140's-1150's: 29, 86; for the 1200's-1230's: 33, 58.

²⁰⁷ I am very grateful to Malcolm Thurlby for drawing my attention to this and for the photo. Dating of Jedburgh: Garton, *The Transitional sculpture of Jedburgh Abbey*, 81.

²⁰⁸ I would like to thank Øystein Ekroll and Margrete Syrstad Andås for drawing my attention to this.

²⁰⁹ Andås also mentions the connection with illuminated manuscripts. Andås, *The Octagon Doorway*, 111.

media.²¹¹ Another aspect of this is that in early thirteenth century England, painting seems to have taken the lead in influencing the development of sculpture, unlike in France, where the roles were reversed and sculpture was the leading medium.²¹² I believe this could be very relevant for the sculpture of the Octagon portal. Although our portal may be dated to a few decades earlier, the tendency of manuscript illumination to influence sculpture could already have been making itself felt in the late twelfth century.

7.5 Astragals and abaci

Looking at the photos from before the restoration, we see that the astragals of all three capitals on the left side of the portal must have been restored. Only the top half was left of the astragal of the “cactus capital”, a little more on the next capital (Fig. 4). Very little can be seen of the third capital, closest to the door, but it looks like the top half of the astragal was left there too. On the right side of the portal, the figure capitals on the right all seem to have had smooth astragals before the restoration. The astragal of the capital with the man and the monkey shows a hint of an edge, but still appears quite smooth (Fig. 58). This capital, as well as the astragal of the capital with the bird being attacked by the dragon, has been restored, but the astragal of the capital with the eagle in foliage looks like it must be original.

The style of astragal can be important in dating. The astragal of the “cactus capital” and the three capitals on the right side of the portal is the typical Early English astragal - a heavy annular shape, the profile of a semi-circle or slightly more.²¹³ The astragals of the two leafy capitals next to the “cactus capital” both clearly had moulded capitals and have been restored as such (Fig. 62 and Fig. 63). For the capital in the middle, the astragal consists of a semi-circle with an indentation underneath. A close example is an astragal from St. Mary’s Church, Saffron Walden (Essex) (1250-1258) (Fig. 64).²¹⁴ This does not necessarily mean that our portal’s astragal has to be that late. The astragal of the capital to the extreme right on the portal’s left side has been restored with a moulded astragal which seems to consist of a roll, then an indentation with an angular fillet and a roll again. I have not been able to find any similar examples, but the “two rolls and angular fillet”- combination is a well known

²¹⁰ Stone, *Sculpture in Britain*, 82, 84; Zarnecki, *Studies in Romanesque Sculpture*, ch IV, 157.

²¹¹ Zarnecki, *Studies in Romanesque Sculpture*, ch IV, 157.

²¹² Willibald Sauerländer, “Sculpture at Westminster Abbey”, in *Cathedrals and Sculpture*, vol. II, (London: Pindar Press, 2000), 461.

²¹³ Paley, *A Manual of Gothic Mouldings*, 59.

²¹⁴ <http://www.stmaryssaffronwalden.org/History.htm> (Accessed October 5th 2011)

feature on the Octagon (on the window course and, as we will see, in the arch moulding profile).

The abaci of the octagon portal's capitals are shaped like one continuous ledge above the capitals, on both sides of the portal. The shape is based on the traditional square abacus on the right side of the portal and on the Early English round abacus on the left side of the portal, adapting to the individual shape of the capital closest to the door on either side (Fig 18 and fig. 43). The difference is barely noticeable. The round abacus is typical of the Early English period and can be found on the window capitals of the Octagon facade and inside the Octagon ambulatory.²¹⁵ A mixture of square and round abaci is not unusual in this period, as we see the same thing at Wells (Fig. 42). I have not been able to find a profile of this abacus in Fischer's archaeological description, but the moulding consists of a large roll at the bottom, a deep hollow, then a small, sharp angular fillet, then a hollow again and a large roll, protruding twice as much as the lower roll. This echoes the widening effect of the corbel bases carrying the portal structure.

Profiles with rolls separated by deep hollows with fillets are common in English late twelfth century work.²¹⁶ We find a simplified version of this in Trondheim cathedral's Royal Entrance (dated to the early thirteenth century), with an angular fillet at the base, then a deep hollow and a large, protruding roll, i.e. the top half of the abacus of the Octagon portal. (Fig.15.A, profile G). A similar design can also be found in the mouldings of the lower part of the choir (completed c. 1240) (Fig, 15.B, profile C), although here the fillet is not angular.²¹⁷ An earlier example is the west portal of Holyrood Abbey (Edinburgh) (c.1200), where we have a continuous abacus conforming to both square and round capitals consisting of rolls and deep hollows, although without the sharp angle-fillet of the Octagon portal (Fig. 65).²¹⁸

All the stylistic elements discussed here belong in the Early English period, although it is interesting that the two moulded astragals and the style of the abacus could indicate a slightly later period. It does seem most likely that they are all contemporary with the capitals, i.e. the 1180's-1190's, although the similarities with the abacus and the abaci of the Royal Portal and the choir, as well as with Holyrood's west portal, indicate that the abacus could be

²¹⁵ Paul Frankl, *Gothic Architecture* (revised by Paul Crossley), (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 85.

²¹⁶ J. Armitage Robinson, "Documentary evidence relating to the building of the cathedral church of Wells (c.1186-1242)", *The Archaeological Journal*, Vol. LXXXV, Second series, Vol. XXXV (1930), 39.

²¹⁷ Ekroll, *Med kleber og kalk*, 154.

of a slightly later date, perhaps c.1200 or the early thirteenth century. If this is the case, it would mean that there was a break in the construction process between the carving of the capitals and the posing of the abacus.²¹⁹

7.6 Summing up for the capitals of the Octagon portal

It seems that great care was taken to ensure symmetry as well as variation in the creation of the capitals of the Octagon portal. This is evident in the composition of the intertwining stems, the foliage, the positions of the birds and lions and the treatment of the lions' manes. There is a very subtle form of symmetry at play and this indicates that the capitals on both sides were designed and executed together. The stylistic affinities with capitals on other parts of the Octagon too, confirm that the sculpture of the portal capitals must be from the same period as the ambulatory capitals and the exterior window capitals. The continued abacus ties both sides together, adapting to the individual shapes of the capitals: Square on the right side, circular on the left side. The moulded astragals and the rounded shape of the abaci on the two foliate capitals could lead one to believe that these two capitals were carved and posed later, but in my opinion the evidence of the dating of the foliage to the 1180's-1190's goes against this. There is however a possibility that the abacus is of a somewhat later date than the capitals, perhaps c.1200-1220, especially seen in the light of a similar looking abacus at Holyrood.

The combination of the Southern-French "cactus capital" and the Northern-French-influenced foliage as well as motifs from, possibly English, illuminated manuscripts, together with the excellent execution, suggest a specialized sculptor (or sculptors) with a French background, somebody who had worked in England and who probably arrived in Trondheim from there. This impression is strengthened when we add to this the Northern English influence noticeable in the corbel supports, bases, hollows and shafts.

My final word on the capitals of the Octagon portal concerns the distribution of foliage and fruits, which is worth noticing. The abundance of foliage on the left side and the

²¹⁸ I would like to thank Malcolm Thurlby for this photo. Dating of Holyrood: Gifford, *Edinburgh*, 131.

²¹⁹ Larsen argues that "All profiles and details ... clearly point to the thirteenth century. The contrast between the concave profiles underneath the capitals and the convex profiles above them is a characteristic trait for parts of Lincoln Cathedral." I have chosen not to go further into Larsen's argument, because I find it lacking in arguments. It will therefore only be referred here. Larsen, *De gotiske skulpturer i Trondheim Domkirke*, 39.

gradual reduction until it finally stops above the mask is interesting and deserves to be looked into more closely in an iconographical context, perhaps in a study of its own.

8. The trefoil, the foliate arch and the masks.

The arch of the Octagon portal consists of several elements. In my opinion they constitute two groups and I would first like to discuss the trefoil above the door, the foliate arch above it and the two grinning masks on the jambs, then the profiled arch with the chevron (Fig. 66).

8.1 The trefoil

As mentioned earlier, Fischer states that the portal's trefoil is new, but that the mouldings and details are certain.²²⁰ One could be led to believe that Fischer by this means that the details of the trefoil are certain, but on closer inspection he must be referring to the foliate trefoil arch, not the plain trefoil beneath it, which must be a modern addition. Fischer mentions that a small semi-circular window was carved into the wall above the portal.²²¹ This can also be seen on the pre-restoration photo (Fig. 67). The window is in the same place as the plain trefoil is now, just below the foliate arch, and most likely dates from late seventeenth/early eighteenth century, but the wall around it must be old, since it's not brickwork, which would be normal in the eighteenth century.²²² It looks as if the opening for the window could have been carved into an already existing semi-circular field. On Schøning's drawing from the eighteenth century, it looks like a shell-shaped semi-circle, more in the style of the Renaissance shell-headed niche (Fig. 68). To me, this is an indication that there never was a plain trefoil there originally, but possibly a plain field with a statue or a semi-circular tympanum field which was possibly made into something else after the Reformation and then into a semi-circular window later, when there was more need for light. The crack in the wall could perhaps date from the carving of the window opening.

Above the trefoil there is another lobed arch, covered in foliage (Fig. 66). This arch has also been restored, but here we have no reason to question Fischer's information about the rich foliage being "largely preserved, but partly so damaged that it had to be re-

²²⁰ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 140.

²²¹ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 616.

²²² I would like to thank Øystein Ekroll for the information about the brickwork and the approximate dating of the window.

carved.”²²³ The outline of this arch seems easier to make out on the photograph from before the restoration (Fig. 67), and on closer inspection we see that it is actually a pointed five-lobed arch - a different style from the lower tri-lobed arch of the portal and the tri-lobed blind arcades inside the Octagon ambulatory. Instead of a trefoil made of three concentric circles, this arch is pointed, with an elongated shape. This is the same style of arch as the trefoils on the Octagon chapel gables and windows, and the fragments of the five-lobed arch in the reconstruction of the thirteenth century arcade fragments found inside the choir (Fig. 69 and Fig. 70).

The use of the tri-lobed portal as an architectural element in Europe dates back to Islamic Spain in the tenth century.²²⁴ It later became a well known feature of Gothic architecture through certain important centres of dissemination such as Cluny, Moissac and Santiago de Compostela.²²⁵

At Noyon Cathedral in Oise, northern France, we come across the tri-lobed blind arcade in the choir triforium as early as 1160-75/80.²²⁶ There are tri-lobed arcades on several Northern English and southern Scottish gabled portal arches, also dating from the last quarter of the twelfth century.²²⁷

8.2 The pointed five-lobed arch

The pointed five-lobed arch of the Octagon portal is based on the regular concentric tri-lobed arch described above, but is a type of lobed arch which in addition has been influenced by the Gothic pointed arch. In this case it seems fruitful to look at blind arcades, since this is where this type of arch belongs. The pointed arch in blind arcades coexisted alongside round arches and round tri-lobed arches until the 1230's when the regular pointed arch becomes the main type of arch in blind arcading.²²⁸ So when does the pointed *tri-lobed* arch appear?

The earliest occurrence of the pointed tri-lobed arch is in England as early as the late twelfth century - often in arcades with combinations of pointed tri-lobed arches and regular

²²³ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 616, note 26.

²²⁴ Watson, *French Romanesque and Islam*, 109.

²²⁵ Watson, *French Romanesque and Islam*, 109.

²²⁶ Tessa Garton, "The Transitional Sculpture of Jedburgh Abbey" in *Romanesque and Gothic: Essays for George Zarnecki*, ed. G. Zarnecki et al. (Woodbridge, Suffolk; Wolfenboro, New Haven: Boydell Press, 1987), 71 note 29.

²²⁷ Garton, "The Transitional Sculpture of Jedburgh Abbey", 71.

²²⁸ All the information in this paragraph is based on Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, *Dictionnaire Raisoné de l'Architecture*, s.v. "arcature" (accessed September 12th 2007).

http://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Dictionnaire_raisonn%C3%A9_de_l%E2%80%99architecture_fran%C3%A7aise_du_XIe_au_XVIe_si%C3%A8cle_-_Tome_1_Arcature#ARCATURES_DE_REZ-DE-CHAUSS.C3.89E

pointed arches.²²⁹ The pointed trefoil can be found in blind arcades in the nave wall in Lincoln cathedral as well as in combination with pointed arch arcades in the transepts (1192-c.1200).²³⁰ The pointed tri-lobed arch also appears at Holyrood Abbey's (Edinburgh) west front (c. 1200 and influenced by Lincoln), decorated with beading and sculpted lobe points (Fig.71).²³¹ The triple gable above the south transept of York Minster (Yorkshire) also has niches decorated with pointed tri-lobed arches, this time with heavy moulding, dating from 1230-1241.²³²

The arch of the Octagon portal is a pointed five-lobed arch, which often appears later than the pointed tri-lobed arch.²³³ This can however be found in Ely Cathedral's (Cambridgeshire) Galilee Porch, as early as 1198-1215, where we find round and pointed five-lobed arches, used side by side on the facade and porch (Fig.72).²³⁴

The pointed lobed arch recurs on the Octagon chapel gables and on the chapels' windows, but only as tri-lobes, not five-lobes (Fig. 69). The gable profiles on the chapels are the same as the profile of the Octagon window course, - two rolls separated by an angular fillet – which could mean that the trefoil gables and the window course are contemporary.²³⁵ To Fischer this is an indication that the tri-lobed arches were part of the design of the Octagon facade from the beginning.²³⁶ Does this mean that the pointed five-lobed arch of the portal was part of the design from the beginning too, or was it a later addition? Other five-lobed pointed arches can be found at Trondheim cathedral, but all from c. 1240 and beyond.²³⁷

The portal's pointed five-lobed arch is covered in foliage and although the lobe points are not decorated in the traditional sense, the foliage seems to form crockets. Crockets inside pointed arches also appear in the blind arcades in the choir of Trondheim cathedral, something which is a rare feature even in England (Fischer mentions the inside of the west front at Wells Cathedral as the only example he can think of) (Fig.73). Both in the

²²⁹ Bond, *Gothic Architecture in England*, 268.

²³⁰ Bond, *Gothic Architecture in England*, 647.

²³¹ John Gifford, Colin McWilliam and David Walker, *Edinburgh, The Buildings of Scotland*, (New Haven and London: Penguin Books, 1984), 131.

²³² Bond, *Gothic Architecture in England*, 657.

²³³ Bond, *Gothic Architecture in England*, 643.

²³⁴ Richard John King, *Handbook to the cathedrals of England*, (Ely: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1862), 176.

²³⁵ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 145.

²³⁶ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 145.

²³⁷ A five-lobed arch, is part of the dividing wall which was reconstructed from fragments found during the nineteenth century restoration, possibly dating from the second half of the thirteenth century – see Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 209, 213. There are also polylobed, pointed windows in the upper levels of the tower.

Trondheim choir and at Wells these arcades date from the first half of the thirteenth century.²³⁸ So to briefly sum up, the use of the five-lobed arch in the Octagon portal seems to indicate a later dating than that of the lower parts of the portal and the capitals (c.1180-90), as a date towards 1210- 1215 at the earliest seems more likely. We will have to investigate the foliage of this arch to get this confirmed.

8.3 The foliage of the arch

The foliage covering the five-lobed arch is different from the foliage on the capitals below. As mentioned earlier, it has been re-carved, based on very good remains. If we compare the photograph from before the restoration with a recent one, it does at closer inspection look as if parts of the original foliage have been kept and parts have been re-carved (Fig.66, 67, 74 and fig.75). For instance, most of the foliage on the top of the arch looks original, as well as most of the foliage on the lower parts. The crockets of foliage seem to have been restored, except perhaps for the lower crocket to the left, but the masks overlooking the entrance are probably original.

The foliage seems to be based on a model of three smaller stems sprouting from a main stem, each with three leaves, three-lobed or five-lobed, but it doesn't follow the model consistently. In at least one place we find a small fruit or pine cone (half way up on the right hand side) and what looks like some round, smooth fruits or balls can be seen at the base and top of the arch on the left hand side (Fig. 74 and fig. 75).

The inside of the arch is edged by a row of smaller, folded leaves and on each of the lobe points there is a crocket of foliage. The central vein of the leaf is in many instances marked all the way from the stem to the rounded tip and unlike much of the stiff-leaf foliage elsewhere in the cathedral, the central vein here is marked by a thin, but prominent edge which seems to have been scooped out from the surface of the leaf. This foliage is more deeply undercut than the leaves on the capitals. In some instances the leaves have a small tear or cut, which, together with the irregular growth of the leaves brings a lot of life to the foliage. This in spite of the surface of the leaves being quite flat and only a few of them seem to bulge slightly.

Stiff leaf foliage is one of the characteristics of Early English architectural sculpture and the swirling and slight projection of the leaves indicate a later stage in the development

²³⁸ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 627, note 61.

than the foliage of the portal's capitals.²³⁹ There are however examples of the capitals' five-lobed leaf and stiff-leaf co-existing on the same capital on the upper levels of the Octagon, so there is not necessarily a strict division there (Fig. 76).²⁴⁰

The exact type of stiff-leaf which is found on the Octagon portal is, as far as I can see, unique on the Octagon facade and possibly also in Trondheim cathedral. There are many examples of stiff-leaf in the cathedral but I have not been able to find an exact match for the portal's stiff leaf foliage anywhere else.²⁴¹ This is not surprising, as the treatment of this type of foliage is very individual and could just as well be a result of individual style and technique and any search for a perfect match could be futile.²⁴²

8.4 The grinning masks

The two grinning masks on the impost stones on either side of the door create a transition to the foliage of the tri-lobed arch (Fig. 77 and Fig. 78). The tufts of hair from their sideburns seem to blend into the foliage of the arch. The character of these masks is different from the mask of the historiated capitals. The treatment of the hair and facial features is different and although they are grinning, nothing comes out of their mouths (Fig. 79 and Fig. 80). In many instances masks like this gape over the door jamb, but here they only show their teeth. The mask to the left seems to have something inside his mouth – possibly a broken off tongue. They both have deep hollows in both sides of their mouths.

The mask to the right has a marked line above his eyebrows, going up into a wrinkle above its nose and a very short forehead. It has also got very marked lines from the nose down to the mouth and around the corners of the mouth. It has large eyes with the centre of the pupils having been scooped out and a large flat nose and a wide grinning mouth with two rows of even teeth. The hair is curly, with a fringe of smaller curls and each lock of hair curling into a twirl. Tufts of hair or beard from the cheeks blend into the foliage around. The

²³⁹ Bond, *Gothic Architecture in England*, 432.

²⁴⁰ On the capital in fig. 74, the stiff-leaf on the capital's chalice is very stiff and coarse, almost as if somebody were practicing carving the new style. The five-lobed leaves of the crockets are much better executed.

²⁴¹ Larsen argues that "The portal's arch has stiff-leaf foliage reminiscent of similar (foliage) at Lincoln Cathedral in the years 1230-1250." Larsen, *De gotiske skulpturer i Trondheim Domkirke*, 39. I have chosen not to investigate Larsen's claim, as this is rather vague and he does not give any precise examples. As far as I can see, the stiff leaf in Trondheim Cathedral's choir, which has been compared to that of Lincoln, is not exactly the same type as that of the Octagon portal. By this I mean the treatment of the central vein and the shapes and numbers of the lobes in particular.

²⁴² I would like to thank Erla B. Hohler for pointing this out to me.

top of the mask's head is smooth - possibly a tonsure or a cap - and the mask has large and clearly visible ears.

The mask to the left has been given a very similar treatment. It has the same furrowed brow, a short forehead, heavy eyebrows and grinning mouth. It also has the same flat nose and staring eyes, with the pupils scooped out and it has curly hair in a slightly messier style. One difference between the two masks is the large bulb on the forehead between the eyebrows, now damaged. Another difference is that this mask has no tonsure and its ears are not showing.

Fischer refers to these masks as being paralleled at the Royal Entrance (c. 1220-1240) and compared with the mask on the west side of the south choir portal, we do find some similarities, but also some differences (Fig. 81).²⁴³ The similarities are the heavy brows, the treatment of the pupils, the bulb above the wrinkled nose and the marked line from the nose and down to the mouth. However, the mask from the Royal Entrance has no forehead, much more space between mouth and nose, with deep lines and a much wider mouth which is gaping all the way around the pillar shafts - not just grinning. The treatment of the hair is also different. Even if there are curls, they are mainly around the face and curl only at the end of the lock of hair. Higher up on the head, the curls are just made up of smooth bulbs, not twirls. The whole mask seems flatter than the Octagon portal's masks. In my opinion this means that we can only say that the masks of the Octagon portal *could* be contemporary with that of the Royal Entrance, but that they were not made by the same hand and that they were most likely based on a different model.

Larsen too found a thirteenth century parallel to these masks. He argues that they are paralleled in a mask in Westminster Abbey's transept triforium dated to c. 1250 (fig. 82). There are definitely similarities in the dimensions of the top half of the mask, with a similar-looking hairstyle and a similar treatment of the eyebrows, but the large nostrils and the longer upper lip and the wide mouth makes the Westminster example seem to have just as much in common with the Royal Entrance mask, as with the Octagon portal's masks.

There are however parallels more contemporary with the construction of the Octagon. The masks at Holyrood Abbey (Edinburgh) (c.1200) are used in the same way – i.e. overlooking an entrance – and they have curly hair and are frowning and grinning (Fig.

²⁴³ Ekroll, *Med kleber og kalk*, 154.

83).²⁴⁴ They do have the same open corners of their mouths as the masks of the Octagon portal, but the fine lines around the mouth and above the bridge of the nose, and the agonized expression, make them seem to have just as much in common with the central mask of the historiated capitals (Fig.46). Perhaps we see the traces of various models of masks here, models whose individual elements could be mixed and matched.

In Fischer's opinion, the Octagon portal's masks are part of the inner foliate arch, which he links to the style of the vaults inside the Octagon ambulatory, where the foliage is also (in some instances) stiff-leaf.²⁴⁵ This would mean that they are of a later date than the portal's capitals and that they date from Fischer's second phase of construction of the Octagon - the small group of workers with experience from Lincoln after 1192.

Andås also discusses this possibility, saying that the use of similar masks at the Royal Entrance indicates a later insertion of these masks at the Octagon portal. Basing her argument on the style of the curls of the mask, Andås concludes that the two masks and the foliate arch may even have been added as late as 1240-1250.²⁴⁶

The idea of a later addition is certainly interesting, but we need perhaps not go as far as to the 1250's. The curls of the Octagon portal's masks are tight and end in a small protruding tip in the centre of the curl. The mask to the right has a fringe of smaller curls across the forehead and larger curls along the sides. The other mask has large curls in a parting. The actual execution of the curls is similar to that of the sculptures of St John and Moses from St Mary's Abbey in York (c. 1200). They have the same tight curls, albeit more finely executed, but they are the same large curls with the small tip protruding in the centre. (Fig. 84). The difference is the actual hairstyle and the way the curls fall: In York the curls are neatly placed side by side, whereas in Trondheim the curls are more untidy and realistic, and the two masks have individual hairstyles. This could indicate a slightly later stage in Trondheim than in York.²⁴⁷ The hairstyle with a fringe of curls is not exclusive to the mid-thirteenth century, as we can see from other late twelfth century examples.²⁴⁸ This is not to suggest that there is a direct link between Trondheim and York in this case, but to show that

²⁴⁴ I would like to thank Malcolm Thurlby for this information and for the photograph. Dating of Holyrood west front: Gifford, *Edinburgh*, 131.

²⁴⁵ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 144.

²⁴⁶ Andås, "The Octagon Doorway", 128, note 3.

²⁴⁷ However, similar curls and hairstyle to the York sculptures can also be found inside Trondheim cathedral's Royal Entrance, on the grimacing corbel head high up on the east wall.

²⁴⁸ See for instance the monk's head from Urnes (c. 1180) in Bergen Museum. See Williamson, *Gothic Sculpture*, 116, fig. 177.

this type of hair did occur in English sculpture around 1200 and thus could have been used for the grinning masks of the Octagon portal around the same time - or slightly later. This style with tight spiral curls across the forehead originated in the Paris-area in the 1150's and it can still be found in the thirteenth century, but with less symmetrical curls.²⁴⁹

The visible ears too, seem to be a feature of the twelfth century, or at least early thirteenth, since the long wavy hair which often occurs in the mid-thirteenth century tends to cover the ears. In the case of the two masks on the Octagon portal it is of course possible that the ears have an iconographic function, especially since the mask on the opposite side has no ears and no cap or tonsure.

The foliage on the impost stones beneath the masks is the same type of foliage as on the arch, - the leaves have the same thin central veins, - but there are also some similarities with the portal's foliate capitals. The small leaves on the bases of the two foliate capitals' chalices can also be found on the bases of the two masks – unfinished on the left mask and more or less completed on the right and the deep central groove of the stems of the central foliate capital can be found on the stone underneath the mask to the right (Fig. 78). The stone underneath the left side mask has a central leaf with vertical traces similar to the large central leaf of the foliate capital closest to the door, ending in something that looks like a down-turned leaf – i.e. the beginning of a crocket capital (Fig 77).²⁵⁰ This could be an indication that the capitals and the impost stones – and consequently the foliate arch too – are, if not contemporary, very close in time.

In conclusion, the five-lobed pointed arch with its foliage does seem to be of a later date than the bases, shafts and capitals of the portal – most likely from the 1190's-1200's, at the earliest. A likely dating for the grinning masks too seems to be from c.1200 onwards. The examples from Holyrood and St. Mary's Abbey show that as early as c.1200 is not impossible for the masks, but the more naturalistic execution, like in the Royal Entrance example, makes a slightly later date more likely.

Let us now look at the rest of the Octagon portal's arch. The dating of the foliage of the impost stones does however not seem to agree with this, as it seems to be closer to the foliate capitals in time.

²⁴⁹ Little, *Set in stone*, 29.

²⁵⁰ Both the tight curls with a raised centre and the large central leaf with ridges can be found in the capital sculpture on the inside of the portal. The inside of the Octagon portal and its relationship to the exterior is however enough material for a separate study. Suffice to say that the sculpture of the Octagon ambulatory is in general dated to c. 1180-1200.

9. *The Octagon portal's profiled arch*

9.1 The moulding profiles of the Octagon portal's arch

The outer arch

Moulding profiles can be an important distinguishing factor in stylistic analysis as a moulding profile can be linked to certain masons or lodges and can in some cases show connections between projects.²⁵¹

The arch of the Octagon portal consists of two different arch mouldings (Fig.13, profiles D and E). In his archaeological survey, Gerhard Fischer refers to the outer arch moulding as being in the style of late-Romanesque and the inner arch moulding as Early Gothic.²⁵² I would like to look at the individual elements of both mouldings, in order to find out whether this can reveal more about the dating of the Octagon portal.

The outer arch moulding has an axial element consisting of a double roll separated by an angle-fillet, then on each side a lateral angle-fillet, two hollows separated by an isolated fillet, an angle-fillet and a roll (in reality a roll and two fillets) (Fig.13 D and fig.85). First of all, the central element – the double roll with the angle fillet. The string course on the Octagon façade has the same double roll and angle fillet as this central element (Fig. 13, profile G). The double roll separated by an angle-fillet is an element which is found in English architecture from 1120-1130, all over England and mainly used in ribs.²⁵³ Here, on the Octagon portal, the double roll and angle-fillet widen to form lozenge-shaped fields along the arch, forming a chevron with buds or flowers inserted into it. This type of chevron is also an early stylistic trait and much used in England in the second half of the twelfth century, after its first appearance at Lincoln west front c. 1145.²⁵⁴

The angle-fillet itself is one of the typical components of the Romanesque and Early Gothic arch or continuous moulding, and it is rarely used in arches in England after the thirteenth century.²⁵⁵ There are some examples of it being used in a way very close to the

²⁵¹ Peter Draper, *The formation of English Gothic: Architecture and Identity*, (New Haven: Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press, 2006), 46.

²⁵² Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 140.

²⁵³ Richard K. Morris, "An English Glossary of Medieval Mouldings: With an introduction to mouldings 1140-1240," *Architectural History* 35 (1992): 3.

²⁵⁴ Garton, "The Transitional Sculpture of Jedburgh Abbey", 73.

²⁵⁵ Morris, "An English Glossary of Medieval Mouldings," 11.

Trondheim moulding: A small group of eastern English mouldings has tiny lateral angle-fillets flanking the axial roll moulding. The most well known examples are from the middle to end of the thirteenth century.²⁵⁶ However, if we look at the arch mouldings of Furness Abbey (Cumbria), (c. 1180) (Fig.19, profile III) and the arch mouldings of Byland Abbey (North Yorkshire) western doorway and windows, (both c. 1190) (Fig. 86 and 87), we see lateral angle-fillets flanking projecting elements already then, albeit in a less regular manner.

The next item on the outer moulding, the free-standing fillet on either side of the central element, is a feature that is found both on the Continent and in English architecture mainly from the second half of the thirteenth century.²⁵⁷ There are several types of free-standing fillet, but Richard K. Morris is of the opinion that the free-standing fillet with two semi-circular hollows (like the one on the Octagon portal's arch) first appears in the north-east of England just before the end of the thirteenth century (the earliest recorded example being the exterior windows at Guisborough, (North Yorkshire) after 1289).²⁵⁸ This would mean that the Octagon portal, or at least the top half including the arch moulding, should be dated to the late thirteenth century – a decade later than the construction of the Octagon's facade. However, according to Stuart Harrison this is not an unusual feature in the north-east of England, even as early as the end of the twelfth century.²⁵⁹ On closer inspection of the profiles of arch mouldings from the north-east of England we find evidence of this. If we look at the main arcade arch moulding from Jervaulx Abbey (North Yorkshire) (recently dated to the 1180's by Stuart Harrison), there is a free-standing fillet flanked by two semi-circular hollows there (Fig 88).²⁶⁰ We find it again in the choir of Lincoln cathedral (c.1195) (Fig.89).

The roll with two fillets which begins and ends the outer arch moulding is a composite English form of the very common roll-and-fillet moulding which can be found both in England and on the Continent.²⁶¹ The original roll-and-fillet moulding (which consists of a roll and one axial fillet – see fig. 85, profiles 7-9) can be found in isolated examples in France, but had its main development in England and it first appeared in the

²⁵⁶ Richard K. Morris, "The development of Later Gothic Mouldings in England c. 1250-1400: Part II", *Architectural History* 22 (1979): 4.

²⁵⁷ Richard K. Morris, "The Development of Later Gothic Mouldings in England c. 1250-1400: Part I", *Architectural History* 21 (1978): 47.

²⁵⁸ Morris, "The Development of Later Gothic Mouldings in England c. 1250-1400: Part I", 46.

²⁵⁹ Conversation with Stuart Harrison on his visit to Trondheim cathedral on March 31st 2011.

²⁶⁰ Stuart Harrison, "Jervaulx Abbey and its relationship to Beverley Minster", *Friends of Beverley Minster Annual Report*, 2010: 10.

north-east of England in the late twelfth century, where it was used for ribs.²⁶² The roll with multiple fillets, like the one we have on the Octagon portal, is distinctive to English masons and can be found in ribs and arches all over the country in the thirteenth century.²⁶³ On our moulding, the fillets blend into the gable on the outer side and into the rest of the arch on the other side, but there are clearly two lateral fillets on each roll. (Fig.13, profiles D and E).

To sum up for the outer arch moulding consists of elements which, perhaps not surprisingly, all belong to the English stylistic vocabulary of the late twelfth to mid-thirteenth century, with a focus on the north-east of England. Like with the lower parts of the portal, we again detect an emphasis on features from Cistercian buildings in Yorkshire and this time also Cumbria (Jervaulx, Byland and Furness). In my opinion, the examples from the late twelfth century combined with the use of element typical for the thirteenth century, point in the direction of the early thirteenth century as a reasonable date for the Octagon portal's outer profiled arch.

The flowers of the chevron

The ten lozenges formed by the chevron are decorated with various types of flowers and foliage. (Fig.90 and Fig. 91). These decorations consist of the same type of foliage which can be found both on the Octagon portal and on the medallions on the Octagon window course. We have a pine cone or a bunch of grapes on a stem, covered in foliage (top left side and possibly top right side), double folded leaves in a swirl (second from top, left side), one long, folded leaf in a swirl appears twice (third from top, left side and second from top, right side), a deeply undercut cluster of finely veined leaves (third from top, right side) and a the same leaves forming a flower (fourth from top, right side and fifth from the top, left side). The fifth decoration from the top, right side is missing, but on the pre-restoration photos it looks like it may have been in the shape of a flower, similar to the decoration above it.²⁶⁴ The finely veined and softly rounded leaves are deeply undercut and that, as well as the way they fold in on the centre, is reminiscent of the foliate medallions on the Octagon's window course more than anything we find on the portal's capitals.²⁶⁵ Similarly finely veined and deeply undercut, rounded leaves can also be found at the Royal Entrance's entrance arch,

²⁶¹ Morris, "An English Glossary of Medieval Mouldings," 14.

²⁶² Morris, "An English Glossary of Medieval Mouldings," 5.

²⁶³ Morris, "An English Glossary of Medieval Mouldings," 8.

²⁶⁴ NDR Archives, photo no. 124

above Adam and Eve (compare Fig 92 and Fig. 93).²⁶⁶ This is interesting in relation to the dating of the outer arch moulding of the portal, and I believe it strengthens my view that the outer arch moulding should be dated to the early thirteenth century.

9.2 The moulding profiles of the arch: The inner arch

The inner arch moulding consists of the axial element of a slightly elongated keeled roll with two lateral fillets and on each side a three-quarter hollow ending in a fillet, then another roll-and-fillet (Fig. 13, profile E). The keeled roll is a feature that originally belongs to twelfth century English and French architecture, where it was first used in ribs (e.g. St Denis 1137-1140).²⁶⁷ The same slender keeled rolls can be found in an arch moulding from Byland Abbey (North Yorkshire) (c. 1190), but without the flanking fillets of the Octagon portal (Fig. 94, profile.4).²⁶⁸ The Octagon portal's keeled roll with lateral fillets, flanked by pear shaped rolls with lateral fillets is, however, to be found in the triforium arcades of Trondheim Cathedral's choir, which in Fischer's view must have been built shortly after the Octagon, in the first decades of the thirteenth century (Fig.95, profile C).²⁶⁹ Ekroll dates the completion of the choir to c.1240.²⁷⁰

On either side of the central element is a three-quarter hollow with fillets. According to Morris, this moulding appears in England from just before the middle of the thirteenth century and was well established there by the end of the century.²⁷¹ It never seems to have evolved as a feature on the Continent.²⁷² The version on the Octagon portal consists of the lateral fillet of the axial element, a three-quarter hollow and a roll-and-fillet on the other side. This is one of the most common types and the use of the keeled roll in this context is an early feature, i.e. before the middle of the thirteenth century.²⁷³ The moulding in general is frequently found in the north-east, east and south-east of England, with Lincoln as a possible centre of development.²⁷⁴ It was used almost exclusively for arches in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, especially for windows, doors and decorative recesses. Contrary to

²⁶⁵ See ill. in Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 142-143.

²⁶⁶ NDR Archives, photo no. 234. Also see ill. in Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 243.

²⁶⁷ Morris, "An English Glossary of Medieval Mouldings," 3.

²⁶⁸ Bond, *Gothic Architecture in England*, 667, fig. 4.

²⁶⁹ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 170.

²⁷⁰ Ekroll, *Med kleber og kalk*, 148.

²⁷¹ Morris, "The Development of Later Gothic Mouldings in England c. 1250-1400: Part I," 39.

²⁷² Morris, "The Development of Later Gothic Mouldings in England c. 1250-1400: Part I," 41.

²⁷³ Morris, "The Development of Later Gothic Mouldings in England c. 1250-1400: Part I," 39.

²⁷⁴ Morris, "The Development of Later Gothic Mouldings in England c. 1250-1400: Part I," 43.

Morris, Harrison is of the opinion that this feature can be encountered slightly earlier in the north-east of England – perhaps as early as 1190-1200.²⁷⁵ At Byland (North Yorkshire) west door (c.1190) we have semi-circular (but not three-quarter) hollows with fillets (Fig. 86 and fig. 87), and at Lincoln choir (c.1195) we have both semi-circular hollows with two fillets and three-quarter hollows with one fillet (Fig. 96, profile 2; Fig.97, profile 6), which in my opinion is enough evidence to date the inner arch moulding of the Octagon portal to the 1190's at the earliest – and possibly more likely to the early 1200's.

The roll-and-fillet which begins and ends this arch moulding has softer, pear-shaped rolls, not semi-circular like on the outer arch moulding, and the roll closest to the wall only has one fillet, with the other side of the roll creating a hollow quirk. The soft, pear shaped rolls with one lateral fillet exist in many versions at Lincoln cathedral after 1192 (Fig. 97 , profile 6) and the hollow quirk is a recurring, early feature in general in English arch mouldings which we find for instance at Byland (North Yorkshire) (1190's) (Fig. 86, top and middle profiles (upper part)).

Summing up for the inner moulding, we see that this too consists of stylistic elements from the north-east of England in the period 1190 – 1250, and yet again we notice the Yorkshire Cistercian (Byland) influence as well as that of Lincoln. The three-quarter hollow with fillets is slightly problematic, as I have not been able to find examples of the exact same type in England as early as the 1190-1200's, but in my opinion the evidence of it used in combination with the other elements is sufficient in order to date the inner arch moulding to the early thirteenth century.

Both arch mouldings have some stylistic features which are just as consistent with the 1180's -1190's, as with the 1210-1220's: The double roll and angular fillet and the keeled roll. The chevron of the outer arch however, is a feature which is more easily associated with the twelfth century, but the flowers of the chevron seem to be of a later style and do fit with a dating in the early 1200's. This is interesting in relation to the dating of the portal's capitals to the 1180's-1190's, but my theory that the abacus could be of a slightly later date than the capitals, (perhaps contemporary with the Royal Entrance) seems to be strengthened by this later dating of the portal's profiled arch.

²⁷⁵ Conversation with Stuart Harrison on his visit to Trondheim cathedral on March 31st 2011.

10. The portal structure, gable and pinnacles.

10.1 The portal structure

In his archaeological description of the cathedral, Fischer states that the pinnacles must be original and that the portal design and the window group tie the facade together (Fig.2).²⁷⁶ I disagree with Fischer's view on the unity of the facade, because the gable and pinnacles clearly interfere with the window arrangement and in my opinion it may look as if the gable and pinnacles were added after the windows had been inserted –or at least planned.

Again, we need to remind ourselves that there were probably several breaks during the construction of the Octagon, both during Archbishop Eystein's exile in 1181-83 and after his death in 1188.

The pinnacles and the top of the gable are built into the wall, but if we look at the masonry, it is very even until it reaches the level of the pinnacles and gable, where it becomes much more uneven, especially on the right side of the portal (Fig. 1). This could be an indication of a rebuilding of the wall when the pinnacles were added.

On a drawing from the NDR archives, we see the stones in the wall behind the gable before the actual restoration (Fig. 98).²⁷⁷ I wanted to investigate the possibility of there ever having been *three* sculpted medallions on the window course (the third being in the centre of the facade, like on the north-east face of the Octagon), something which could have argued for the gable and pinnacles being a later addition. On each side of each medallion there are visible joins where the stone was inserted into the window course. We find the same joins on either side of the gable. However, the drawing shows that the stone inserted into the window course behind the gable only has a square opening to fit the tip of the gable – and no trace of a circular medallion. Even if the stone had a medallion and was changed to fit the gable tip, it is not unlikely that the window course medallions are a thirteenth century insertion, in which case the medallions cannot be used in terms of dating the Octagon portal.²⁷⁸

10.2 The gable

²⁷⁶ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 144.

²⁷⁷ I am very grateful to Kjerst Kristoffersen for drawing this to my attention.

²⁷⁸ Anker, "Høymiddelalderens skulptur i stein og tre", 162-163.

I have touched upon the subject of the portal construction earlier, but the Lombard connection seems unsatisfactory. There are however several examples in northern England and southern Scotland of projecting, gabled porches in smaller scale and dating from presumably the same period as the Octagon portal.²⁷⁹ Like the portal in Trondheim, both Jedburgh Abbey's west portal (Scottish Borders) and other Scottish and Northern English portals are formed by a thickening of the wall and thus do not seem to necessarily have been part of the original design (Fig. 99).²⁸⁰ The problem with these portals, in our context, is that they do not have pinnacles.

The west front of Laon Cathedral (Picardy), which was begun 1180-1185, is the first instance of the arch and gable being combined in a monumental context, in what would become the typical Gothic porch, with the arch penetrating the gable - and in this instance there are pinnacles combined with the gable too (Fig. 100).²⁸¹ Unlike the Romanesque porch, where the bottom of the triangle of the gable sits above the apex of the arch and becomes a unit of its own, the triangle of the gable of the Gothic porch has ceased to be a triangle and is pressed down onto the arch, so that the sides of the triangle touch the arch. The Octagon portal is much smaller than a porch and is a much more shallow structure, but it is definitely a Gothic and not a Romanesque gable. Assuming it was chosen because it was the height of fashion for portals when it was made, - which is very likely, considering the prestigious nature of the building project - it cannot be earlier than 1185 and is most likely slightly later.

The gable's foliate medallions

The two foliate medallions which are sitting where the gable meets the pinnacles have been restored, possibly based on the foliate medallions on the Octagon's window course (Fig. 98 b). On the pre-restoration photos there are no traces of anything there at all (Fig. 3). The same goes for Schirmer's drawing (Fig. 30). Nor is there anything on Schøning's drawing, but he mentions that "Above the archivolt there is finally a ledge (...), which from both sides starts with two heads which are now knocked off..."²⁸² Schøning says no more about this and we

²⁷⁹ In her study of Jedburgh Abbey, Tessa Garton lists Balderton (Nottinghamshire), St Margaret Walmgate, York, Adel, Askham Bryan, Askham Richard, Kirkstall and Nun Monkton (Yorkshire), Durham Cathedral and St Cutbert, Darlington (County Durham), Brinkburn Priory (Northumberland) and Kelso, Arbroath and Kirkliston (Scotland) in addition to Jedburgh (c.1180). Garton, "The Transitional Sculpture of Jedburgh Abbey," 69-71.

²⁸⁰ Garton, "The Transitional Sculpture of Jedburgh Abbey," 70.

²⁸¹ Frankl, *Gothic Architecture*, 90.

²⁸² Schøning, *Beskrivelse*, 77.

have no more information about what could have been there originally, but heads can be found in the same position on Trondheim Cathedral's north portal.²⁸³

On the choir portal of Stavanger Cathedral (c. 1270), which may have been modeled on the Octagon portal, there is a head on the gable, in the same place where Valkendorf's coat of arms sits on the Octagon portal. There is of course a possibility that there once was a head in that position in Trondheim too.²⁸⁴

10.3 The Pinnacles

The pinnacles of the Octagon portal are octagonal with framed open fields and a circle of billets underneath their conical caps. The pinnacles of the north and south Octagon chapels (but not the east chapel) have the same framed fields as the pinnacles of the Octagon portal, but with a dogtooth moulding inside and no billets underneath their caps

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the pinnacles are built into the wall. As mentioned, the masonry is quite uneven on this level on the right hand side of the portal, which could mean that the pinnacles were inserted, with the gable, after the construction of the wall. However, the stone constituting the lower part of the pinnacle on the right hand side seems to be one with the profiled arch all the way through to where it meets the foliate arch.²⁸⁵ This means that the pinnacles, gable and profiled arch must be contemporary. We have already seen that the profiled arch shows strong indications of being from the early thirteenth century.

The pinnacle is an architectural feature which seems to have come into use earlier in France than in England – from the late twelfth century – but mainly in combination with buttresses at first.²⁸⁶ Slightly later on the pinnacle becomes more of a decorative element in itself. The closest example to the Octagon portal's pinnacles which I have been able to find are the pinnacles of Wells cathedral's north porch (c.1200-1240) (Fig. 101). The construction of the

²⁸³ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 289.

²⁸⁴ Hauglid, *Romanske konsollfriser*, 16. Hauglid here refers to Axel L. Romdahl, "Trondhjems-katedralens octogon och dess betydelse som arkitektonisk förebild" i *Kunst og Haandverk: Nordiske Studier* (Kristiania: Alb. Cammermeyers forlag, 1918), 176-177. For ill. of the Stavanger portal see Øystein Ekroll, Morten Stige og Jiri Havran, *Kirker i Norge*, (Oslo: Arfo, 2000), 118.

²⁸⁵ I would like to thank Øystein Ekroll for bringing this to my attention on our excursion on Nov. 11th 2010.

²⁸⁶ Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, *Dictionnaire Raisonné de l'Architecture*, s.v. "pinnacle" http://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Dictionnaire_raisonné%20de_l%20architecture_fran%20aise_du_XIe_au_XVe_si%20cle_-_Tome_7,_Pinacle (accessed October 10th 2011).

porch itself is not documented, but 1215 or later seems to be most likely.²⁸⁷ At Wells, the pinnacles have been used in the traditional way, on top of buttresses, and the conical caps are almost the same length as the pinnacles themselves – unlike in Trondheim, where the pinnacles are much longer than the caps. At Wells there are no billets, but we do have the same octagonal pinnacles with open fields as in Trondheim.²⁸⁸ This makes a dating of the portal's pinnacles to the 1210's very likely. As we can see, we now have some strong indications that the top half of the Octagon portal must date from the early thirteenth century, and not the late twelfth century.

10.4 The question of rebuilding

Summary of the stylistic evidence

This is what we now know about the dating and origin of the various stylistic elements of the Octagon portal: The stylistic evidence for the lower parts of the portal, i.e. the corbel supports, bases, shafts and hollows, seems to indicate the last two decades of the twelfth century as a reasonable dating. The workers seem to have been from a Northern English background. The evidence for the portal's capitals too indicates the 1180's-1190's, but here the background of the artists seems to be undeniably French, with stylistic elements from both Northern and Southern France. This is mixed with a strong influence from English illuminated manuscripts. There seems to be a division between the lower part of the portal and the upper part, which starts with the abaci – they could be of a later date than the capitals, perhaps as late as the 1200's. This impression continues with the two grinning masks, which can be no earlier than the 1200's, and the foliate five-lobed arch which must be dated to the 1190's at the earliest. The stylistic evidence for the profiled arch, the gable and pinnacles all seem to indicate a dating sometime in the early thirteenth century.

Rebuilding?

Does this mean that there was a rebuilding of the portal at some point between the 1180's and the early 1200's? This has earlier been hinted at by both Fischer and Andås and the

²⁸⁷Peter Kidson, and Pamela Tudor-Craig, (eds.) Introduction to 'Wells: Nave and Transepts', *Courtauld Institute Illustration Archive* 1 (6), (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 1978), iv; W. Rodwell, *Wells Cathedral: Excavations and Structural Studies, 1978-93* (2 Vols.) English Heritage Archaeological Report 21, (London: English Heritage, 2001), 146.

²⁸⁸ Billets around the cap of the pinnacle can however be found at York Minster's south transept (c. 1215-55), but the pinnacles themselves are not very similar to those of the Octagon portal.

argument has been the stylistic differences between foliate arch with the two grinning masks and the rest of the portal.²⁸⁹ As we have now seen, there is stylistic evidence which argues for (at least) two periods on the construction of the portal.

In my opinion it is possible that the portal's original *intended design* was without the gable and pinnacles, and that it would have had an additional arch moulding to correspond to all of the orders of the capitals. This would be much more in line with what was common for portal construction at the time. A portal arch where all the orders do not correspond with a receiving capital or continued shaft would be unusual. I am however not saying that the portal was constructed this way and then altered – there is no evidence for that. What I am saying is that there may have been a first version of the Octagon portal which was never completed, left unfinished during the years 1181-83 *or* (perhaps more likely) during the years 1188-1206 - and then completed. This would explain some of the stylistic idiosyncrasies, such as the earlier dating of the capitals and the later dating of the abaci and the rest of the portal's top half.

I see no direct stylistic evidence of a reconstruction, but rather of a continued, and temporarily interrupted, process over a longer period of time. In my opinion, two arguments speak in favour of this theory: The foliage on the impost stones, which seems to have elements from *both* to the period of the capitals and the foliate arch – and the “missing” order of the profiled arch, which I believe may have been part of the original intended design, but which was abandoned when the new idea of a gable and pinnacles was introduced.

Part 4. The Octagon portal in the perspective of “style as choice”

11. The circumstances around the construction of the Octagon

I would like to return to my theoretical perspective for this final part about the Octagon portal and style as a result of choice. I am particularly interested in the idea of trying to see the monument as a whole in its historical context (to the extent that this is at all possible), so this is what I intend to do with the Octagon portal. Then I shall try to discern the

²⁸⁹ See ch. 2.3 *Construction periods*.

circumstances which led to the creation of the monument.²⁹⁰ Further, I would like to see if it is possible in this specific case, to see style as a result of “choice motivated by specific conditions” and also whether we should distinguish between “style” or “a sense of decorum” in this case.²⁹¹

Reconstructing the entire historical context of the creation of a building (or indeed any work of art) is impossible, but it may be fruitful to *attempt* a reconstruction while at the same time taking into account “the range of social, political, economic and religious factors by which its form and appearance may have been determined.”²⁹² In other words we can try to get as close as possible. In this case, I will try to limit the circumstances to what we *can* know and to what I see as most relevant.

11.1 The historical, political and religious context of the building of the Octagon

The second half of the twelfth century saw a strengthening of the position of the Church in Norway, with the establishment of the See of Nidaros (Trondheim) in 1153. The cult of St. Olaf had rapidly spread locally and was developed even further by Archbishop Eystein Erlandsson in what seems like a conscious effort to strengthen the position of the Church in the on-going power struggle with the king.

The cult of royal saints had a long tradition in England, predating the Norman Conquest.²⁹³ The cults of St Olaf and other Scandinavian royal saints seem to have been inspired by this tradition.²⁹⁴ Norway in the twelfth century had strong ties to England on cultural, religious and economical levels and it is not surprising that this is where Archbishop Eystein went during his exile in the years 1181-83 after his conflict with King Sverre.²⁹⁵ It has been documented that Archbishop Eystein spent some months both at Bury St Edmunds and at Lincoln and it seems likely that he must have visited Canterbury, London, Winchester

²⁹⁰ Draper, “Interpreting the Architecture of Wells Cathedral,” 116.

²⁹¹ Liepe, “*Om stil och betydelse i romansk stensulptur*,” 165; Draper, “Interpreting the Architecture of Wells Cathedral”, 127.

²⁹² Peter Draper, *The formation of English Gothic: Architecture and Identity*, 10.

²⁹³ Paul Binski, *Becket's Crown: Art and Imagination in Gothic England 1170-1300*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004, 81.

²⁹⁴ Sven Lundkvist, “Sankt Olavskultens bakgrund i den europeiska pilgrimskulturen” i *Helgonet i Nidaros*, ed. Lars Rumar, (Skrifter utgivna av Riksarkivet, 1997), 161

²⁹⁵ Erik Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein: Statsmann og kirkebygger*, (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1996), 32-33. England was Norway's main area of contact when it came to trade, political connections and religious influence, especially the east coast of England, with the important trading centres of Lincoln and York. The first Norwegian monasteries all had close ties to the big English houses on the east coast.

and perhaps even Fountains Abbey in Yorkshire.²⁹⁶ On his departure for Norway in 1183, King Henry granted him the right to import one ship per year with grains, free of taxes – a right that was re-confirmed by subsequent kings.²⁹⁷ Not only did this improve the income of the already wealthy archbishop, it also facilitated the ordering of teams of workmen from England. We do not know whether Eystein requested someone in particular, based on what he had seen or heard of their work, or whether he simply asked for the best workers available at the time from his English connections.

The remains of St Olaf had been moved between various other churches in Trondheim before they were finally transferred to Olaf Kyrre's Christ Church and then to the new cathedral.²⁹⁸ The increasing flow of pilgrims to St Olaf's shrine must have led to a need for enlargement of the church and make it more available to pilgrims. The attraction of pilgrims would have been important, not just financially, but also for the establishment of Trondheim as an important religious centre in northern Europe. Whether or not Trondheim was seen as a major pilgrimage centre internationally in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the intention for it to be perceived like it was certainly there.²⁹⁹ I shall argue that this intention could be reflected in certain architectural features of the Octagon portal.

11.2 The artistic context of the building of the Octagon

The patron and the master mason: Decisions and responsibilities

Archbishop Eystein has been attributed a lot of responsibility for the final appearance of the Octagon.³⁰⁰ We should take care in attributing too much influence to the patron when it comes to the actual appearance of a building. In medieval sources, the patron is often called "the builder," a wording which has often led later times to believe that the patron had more influence on the design and building process than he actually did.³⁰¹ It is likely that the patron's wishes are expressed in the type of building he ordered and the resources made available for it. Patrons are known to have requested the services of particular individuals

²⁹⁶ Erik Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein. Statsmann og kirkebygger*, (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1996), 251-253.

²⁹⁷ Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein*, 253.

²⁹⁸ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 17-19

²⁹⁹ Jørn Sandnes, "Olav den hellige- myter og virkelighet" i *Helgonet i Nidaros*, ed. Lars Rumar, (Skrifter utgivna av Riksarkivet, 1997), 24.

³⁰⁰ Fischer repeatedly refers to the Octagon as "Eystein's Octagon" and wonders where he could have seen anything similar, whether it was in his earlier years in France or during his exile in England in the 1180's.

³⁰¹ John Harvey, *The Medieval Architect*, (London:Weyland, 1972), 57.

who must have been well known for their work and the choice of architect and master builder/workmen would have said a lot about the level of quality he expected.³⁰²

The design of a building in general must be attributed to the master mason, but the patron would have had to sanction the use of expensive materials, any change of plan and similar things.³⁰³ The patron would have had an interest in the artistic expression of any specific religious ideas, but a lot may also have been down to “a sense of decorum” or simply a sense of what was becoming in this or that specific context. It is unlikely that the patron would have been concerned with aspects like architectural or decorative details but it is likely that he would have been involved in what the building was going to express.³⁰⁴ This seems even more evident when we read accounts and descriptions of architecture from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries – the emphasis is not on architectural details or technicalities, but on grandeur, splendour, surpassing other works and originality seems to have been less important than magnificence.³⁰⁵

The interests of Archbishop Eystein

In order to examine the most relevant aspects of the artistic context, it is vital to first of all concentrate on what was required from the point of view of the patron – the archbishop. The Octagon was a prestigious project which a lot of resources were put into.³⁰⁶ Although an impressive amount of decoration remains on the Octagon facade, a lot of decoration must have been lost.³⁰⁷ As we have seen, the Archbishop of Nidaros was wealthy and very well connected and certainly in the position to order works completely on the level of contemporary European church buildings. It is also clear that what he required was a shrine to the most important saint in the country – the *rex perpetuus* of Norway. The *type* of edifice he wanted is probably, in this case, closely connected to the *appearance* he wanted. There are strong similarities between the cults of the Scandinavian royal saints and the cults of the Anglo-Saxon royal saints, but in St. Olaf Archbishop Eystein also had a *recent* saint and one whose martyrdom was connected to political events and conflict with powerful groups in

³⁰² Harvey, *The Mediaeval Architect*, 36; Liepe, “om stil och betydelse i romansk stensulptur”, 170.

³⁰³ Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic*, 33.

³⁰⁴ Nicola Coldstream, *Masons and Sculptors*, (London: British Museum Press, 1991), 24.

³⁰⁵ Wirth, *La datation de la sculpture médiévale*, 90-91.

³⁰⁶ Hauglid, *Romanske konsollfriser*, 35.

³⁰⁷ See an overview of earlier times’ descriptions of Trondheim Cathedral external sculpture in Hauglid, *Romanske konsollfriser*, 39.

Norwegian society.³⁰⁸ What is even more important is that a martyr under such circumstances, a representative of the power of God, and consequently the Church, would have had to be portrayed as stronger than the secular powers which caused his death and would have to be given suitable setting, on level with other royal saints elsewhere.

The master as artist

Eystein must have had an architect, who again must have had a master builder (if they were not the same person, as could often be the case), who in turn supervised teams of masons and specialist sculptors. The masons' lodge in Trondheim shows every indication of having been an international lodge, consisting of both local (permanent) and foreign (temporary) workers.³⁰⁹

The traditional view has been that there were no individual artists in the Middle Ages, that works of art were made by spontaneously composed teams of craftsmen with a sense of common purpose, whose art was a direct result of the material without any intervening stage of design and that because we don't know the names of the artists (or they appear in an impersonal manner in the archives) they can't have been viewed as individual artists by their contemporaries.³¹⁰ Only since the 1970's has this view changed. John Harvey argues that the many references to artists and their works of art show that they were kept in high esteem, as does the use of the title "Master". They were also in many cases able to request high fees and the many accounts of conflict between patron and architect or master mason indicate that at least they were of a certain social level. The income and social status of a medieval artist did of course depend on which level he was on in the professional hierarchy and there would have been a big difference between the architect or master mason and a regular stone mason. Specialists working with sculpture or stained-glass would most likely have had a higher status.³¹¹ Matthew M. Reeve has shown that medieval artists in some cases, like at Wells Cathedral in the period 1190-1210, had considerable artistic freedom and that they in sometimes seem to have been completely in charge of the artistic contents of their work,

³⁰⁸ This is not unlike the cult of St Thomas of Canterbury, and the recent construction of Trinity Chapel and the Corona there in the 1170's could have been an inspiration to Eystein.

³⁰⁹ Ekroll, *Med kleber og kalk*, 114, 152, 154.

³¹⁰ Harvey, *The Mediaeval Architect*, 33-34.

³¹¹ All the information in this paragraph is based on Harvey, *The Mediaeval Architect*, 34.

without having to adhere to a specific iconographical programme or the requests of a patron.³¹²

A widespread notion about medieval artists has been that most of them were part of the clerical world, either as academic clerks with university degrees or monks and friars. However, Harvey has demonstrated that the importance of breeding in medieval society as well as the hereditary character of many crafts, means that the majority of medieval craftsmen and artists were laymen from families of some means (often freeholders of substantial properties), since only men of free status could enter the craft guilds.³¹³ Although this concerns England and not Norway, I have chosen to rely on this evidence for my study here as my focus is on portal builders and capital sculptors – both most likely itinerant foreign experts, probably English and/or French.

In the early twelfth century sculpted stone portals were new even to England and itinerant teams of French specialist sculptors seem to have been at work many places.³¹⁴ The same could have been the case in Trondheim in the late twelfth century. Stone sculpture was a recent feature in Norwegian medieval art and although experienced wood carvers can be trained as stone sculptors, the patron of the Octagon would most likely have wanted the best artists available for his new prestigious building.

It is likely that architects and small groups of craftsmen could have travelled and worked together.³¹⁵ According to Jean Wirth, they are likely to have been a small and skilled élite, who communicated and were able to move quickly between projects, something which explains the rapid developments in architecture in this period.³¹⁶ Whereas templates were often used for general architectural features, specialized craftsmen such as sculptors seem to have brought with them their own models and designs.³¹⁷ Masons' moulding templates were designed by the master mason himself and can be seen as his personal signature, which is

³¹² Matthew M. Reeve, "The Capital Sculpture of Wells Cathedral: Masons, Patrons and the Margins of English Gothic Architecture", *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, Vol.163 (2010): 80. I am very grateful to Erla B. Hohler for drawing my attention to this article.

³¹³ Harvey, *The Medieval Architect*, 75-76. In the English documentary material there is an explicit claim that masons are descended from lords' sons. Harvey says this is a point for future research, but adds that in the Articles of the *Constitutions* of the English Masons it is stated explicitly that masters should not in any circumstance accept apprentices of bond (un-free) blood, both because this might lead to conflict with their masters and because the craft had originated among "great lords' children freely begotten."

³¹⁴ Paul Williamson, *Gothic sculpture 1140-1300*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 102.

³¹⁵ Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic*, 102. Draper points to the example of the architect William of Sens at Canterbury and the fact that the French sculptors responsible for the foliate capitals at Canterbury and several other places seem to have left when William went back to France.

³¹⁶ Wirth, *La datation de la sculpture médiévale*, 175.

why they can be so important in the dating of monuments.³¹⁸ In relation to the patron's wishes, there is documentary evidence to show that artistic personality could often dominate the patron's intentions and that there in some cases were strong conflicts.³¹⁹

The origins of stylistic features

The second half of the twelfth century was a period of experimentation and rapid change in architecture in England and on the Continent. The variety of designs and features from different areas in France which can be found in widely spread English buildings show that there was a number of architects working in England who must have had direct experience from recent buildings in North-East France.³²⁰ This complicates the picture if we are trying to discern which features are French, and which are English. Paul Williamson argues that it is pointless to try to distinguish between French and English for the south-east of England in this period, and Matthew M. Reeve has shown that the masons at Wells Cathedral in the period 1184-1210 must have had a considerable knowledge of both English and French practices, which went beyond just hiring of a French team of workers.³²¹

This of course affects Trondheim cathedral as well, as new architectural and stylistic features would have arrived with the workers. As we have seen, the Octagon can be linked stylistically to both England and France. The English features indicate at least two different teams of workers and at least two different periods of construction.³²²

Finally, we also need to keep in mind that the origin (and therefore also the style) of the foreign workers arriving in Trondheim was determined, not only by whose services the patron requested, but also on who was available at that specific time. This in turn depended on the big building projects and political events in England.

Northern English – Northern French influences

We have seen that there is a heavy Northern English influence in many of the elements of the Octagon portal, particularly the lower part (corbels, bases, shafts and hollows), the astragals and abaci of the capitals and the profiled arch. This Northern English influence seems to be

³¹⁷ Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic*, 17. This is indicated by the sources and affiliations of sculpture and stained glass in France.

³¹⁸ Coldstream, *Masons and sculptors*, 31.

³¹⁹ Reeve, "The Capital Sculpture of Wells Cathedral", 80.

³²⁰ Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic*, 101.

³²¹ Williamson, *Gothic Sculpture*, 102; Reeve, "The Capital Sculpture of Wells Cathedral", 82.

³²² Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 160, 163.

divided between Lincoln and some of the Cistercian buildings of Yorkshire and Cumbria, with some possible links to Scotland. The foliage of the capitals stands out as more typical of Northern France, and the shape of the capitals as well as the portal's pinnacles, point in the direction of the south-west of England and Wells. Is it likely that one small portal in Trondheim can possess features with such varied origins?

There has been an ongoing debate about the influence of the Cistercians on Early English Gothic in northern England. Christopher Wilson has argued that the Cistercians should be seen as the "missionaries of Gothic" in the north of England, whereas Malcolm Thurlby argues that many of the "Cistercian" elements of Early Gothic architecture in northern England had already been assimilated into the Early Gothic of northern France and could have arrived directly that way.³²³ What seems to be relevant for the Octagon and the Octagon portal is that Northern French influences can be found both in the Cistercian architecture of Yorkshire and in the architecture of York Minster and St. Mary's Abbey from the 1170's onwards, but also at Wells in the south-west of England from the 1180's.³²⁴ York and Canterbury were major centres in the diffusion of Early Gothic architecture in the 1170-1180's and it seems likely that new influences would have reached Trondheim via one of them. The heavy Northern English influence makes York a more likely point of departure for the Octagon portal. Influences from Lincoln seem to have been very important in the construction of Trondheim Cathedral from the 1190's onward. Lincoln too became a major northern centre of diffusion, which can be shown to have influenced buildings further north, such as Holyrood Abbey.³²⁵ Northern French influences could have reached Lincoln through direct contact with French workers, via the Cistercian architecture in the north of England - or via Wells, when the new bishop Hugh arrived at Lincoln from Wells in 1209.³²⁶ It is impossible to say exactly how the various influences reached Trondheim, but the impression from the Octagon portal is that it may reflect the building process of the Octagon: A first construction phase with workers from York or Yorkshire combined with workers with a French or French-English background for the treatment of the capitals, then a second phase

³²³ Christopher Wilson, "The Cistercians as "missionaries of Gothic" in Northern England", in *Cistercian Art and Architecture in Britain*, ed. C. Norton and D. Park, 86-116. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Malcolm Thurlby, "Roger of Pont L'Evêque, Archbishop of York (1154-81) and French Sources for the Beginning of Gothic in Northern Britain", in *England and the Continent in the Middle Ages: Studies in Memory of Andrew Martindale*, ed. J. Mitchell (Stamford: Harlaxton Medieval Studies VIII, 2000), 36,47.

³²⁴ Reeve, "The Capital Sculpture of Wells Cathedral", 82.

³²⁵ Gifford, *Edinburgh*, 131.

³²⁶ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 171.

with workers with a background from Yorkshire, Lincoln and possibly also Wells. We are probably not talking about a big team here. The construction of a small portal such as this may have required the efforts of only a few people.

Local preconditions

In Trondheim, we have the cult of a royal saint and the continuation of an older prestigious site, combined with extensive resources, an international masons' lodge and the local soapstone, which was a new material to the foreign stone masons, but soft and easy to carve. Trondheim already had its own artistic culture, which, according to Jean Wirth's theory about *periphery and trans-periphery*, means that new artistic influences would have been rapidly absorbed and transformed into a new expression, and that new architectural elements could have been imported and accepted without much delay at all.³²⁷

A summary of the circumstances

The Octagon was a building of prestige, built in a relatively short period of time by a large number of workers and with a lot of resources spent on it in terms of materials and skilled craftsmen. It was built for a specific purpose – to house the shrine of a royal saint. It was also a manifestation of the power of the new archbishop's see, reflecting the power of the international Church. The patron had the means to order the best workers available internationally. The artistic expression of the Octagon, and of the Octagon portal, is a result of the skills and background of these workers, combined with that of the local workers and their traditions and skills. The politically turbulence of the period means that there were most likely several building periods.

12. The Octagon portal in relation to these circumstances

12.1 The elements of the Octagon portal in the perspective of *style as choice*

Does the *style as choice*-perspective work in relation to the Octagon portal? Let us look again at the various stylistic elements.

The corbel bases, which originally seemed so out of place, can be linked to the Cistercian architecture of north-east England in the last quarter of the twelfth century.

³²⁷ Wirth, *La datation de la sculpture médiévale*, 124-126.

The double water-holding bases, the hollows and the marble shafts are also English features, they too consistent with the architecture of the north-east of England in the last quarter of the twelfth century.

The capitals have both English and French features, but were in my opinion most likely carved by somebody with experience from both Northern France and England. The astragals are Early English, but the foliage consists of French-inspired smooth leaf/acanthus and five-lobed leaves mixed with intertwining stems and imagery inspired by English manuscript illumination, still from the last quarter of the twelfth century, possibly a little later. The abaci also seem to be English, from the first decades of the thirteenth century and so do the profiled arch, the foliate five-lobed arch with the masks and the gable.

All these features were very modern at the time, something which is consistent with the prestigious nature of this building project. The only features which can be said to be “old-fashioned,” or seemingly out of place in this context are the “cactus capital,” the chevron and possibly also the keeled roll of the moulding profile of the portal’s inner arch, which can all be said to echo similar features inside. In my view, this is interesting in the light of the *style as choice*-concept.

The “cactus capital” echoes the smooth “cactus capitals” inside the ambulatory as well on the Octagon facade, but can also be seen as a reference to the big pilgrimage churches in Southern France, on the road to Santiago de Compostela. We know that this type of capital was used extensively there and that it there may have been chosen because it was a traditionally prestigious decorative element, which had connotations to the history of the early Christian Church. This is a feature which would have been familiar to anyone who had been on pilgrimage to Santiago and it may, by the late twelfth century, also have had connotations of martyrdom and sainthood. It is possible that this is the reason why we often find this type of capital employed near the sanctuary in many churches in the south but even in the north of France, and I believe this may be why it was employed at the Octagon.

The chevron picks up the motif of the chevron of the Octagon’s south chapel, but adapts it to the style of the early 1200’s by adding more naturalistic foliage instead of the stylized buds of the original, which again is very close stylistically to the chevron at Lincoln’s west portal. This type of chevron occurs in many places and may not necessarily be a reference to Lincoln here, but it could perhaps be seen as a reference to the importance of

the Octagon's south chapel, where Archbishop Eystein is likely to have been buried.³²⁸ This of course only makes sense if the profiled arch with the chevron was made after the burial of Eystein in 1188. This would also explain the seemingly self-contradictory combination of Fischer's "Late-Romanesque zig-zag effect" in the outer arch moulding and "completely Early Gothic" inner arch moulding.³²⁹

It may be far-fetched to include the keeled roll of the moulding profile in this list of the portal's elements which pick up features from the inside, but the fact of the matter is that without the flanking fillets it this profile is a regular feature of the twelfth century, - not the thirteenth, - and it does echo the keeled profiles of the marble shafts flanking the entrances to all three Octagon chapels, as well as the entrance to the Chapter House and the interior of the Octagon portal. These keeled shafts also occur on the Octagon facade. I believe there is a possibility that this moulding was employed in the arch of the Octagon portal for this reason.

In my opinion it seems likely that the elements mentioned above were selected and employed for the decoration of the Octagon portal because of what they signified in relation to the Octagon's interior and, in the case of the "cactus capital" also for its connotations to other and similar religious contexts elsewhere.

12.2 Style as choice and/or style as decorum

What can we deduct from these stylistic choices now that we have determined that this is what they could be?

The first thing which becomes apparent is that the style of the portal as a whole is not as self-contradictory as it at first may have seemed. The somewhat eclectic appearance is a result of combined efforts of artists from different backgrounds and of a period of change and experimentation. The entire portal construction shows choices made on the basis of the master builder's and or workers' background - i.e. what was fashionable at the time in the areas they came from as well as what they were capable of executing - in combination with the patron's requirements: A suitably decorated portal opening into the east end of the cathedral.

If there was a conscious pictorial program for the capital sculpture of the Octagon portal, was the patron responsible for the choice of style and iconography? This is unlikely. It

³²⁸ Ekroll, "The shrine of St.Olav", 183.

³²⁹ Fischer, *Domkirken i Trondheim*, 140.

is much more probable that he would have given an indication of what was required in relation to the use of the portal and then the sculptors would have been given the responsibility for the execution, possibly in collaboration with the master builder.

How about the possible references to the inside of the Octagon, or to other churches elsewhere - was this too the responsibility of the master builder and the artists? I believe so. It may not have been a conscious choice to copy the decorative repertoire of other religious buildings, but rather a sense of what would be suitable and fitting for such an edifice as the Octagon – in other words a “sense of decorum”.³³⁰ We are sometimes surprised at the international character of the Norwegian church in this period, but it is important to bear in mind that in the late twelfth and early thirteenth century, the fairly recently established See of Nidaros would have regarded itself very much as a part of the international Western Christian community. The use of decorative vocabulary from religious buildings in other parts of Europe can be seen as, not “quoting” the formal architectural vocabulary of other and more famous churches, but actually *speaking* the language of the universal Church.³³¹

12.3 The pros and cons of the style as choice-perspective.

So, does the style as choice-perspective work in relation to the Octagon portal?

There are some hazardous aspects of employing this perspective, especially on part of a building – like I have done here – and not the entire building. A concept so reliant on context is risky to use on something which is part of a larger whole. I have therefore had to keep the context of the Octagon and its decorative scheme in mind continually. This is something which can be both rewarding and complicating, as there is a risk of getting lost in the context when employing this perspective.

Another potentially hazardous point is the complexity of the combination of stylistic features of any given object of investigation. *All* features are unlikely to be significant in this context, but all features should be investigated. Some stylistic elements may have been introduced with a specific purpose, some may have been used without reflection because of tradition and some may have been used because it was the most practical solution in that specific context. As we have seen with the Octagon portal, some features which seem out of place from the start can be shown to belong to the period in question after all, like the

³³⁰ Draper, “Interpreting the Architecture of Wells Cathedral”, 127.

³³¹ Binski, *Becket's Crown*, 24.

unusual-looking corbel supports. In this case, an architectural element was used in a new way for a practical reason – something which can also be seen as an aspect of the *style as choice*-concept.

A third problematic point is that this perspective potentially demands a lot of knowledge which we do not have and cannot have. We can *attempt* to reconstruct the past, but we can never know with certainty. This leaves a lot to be deduced and inferred and this is a weakness to be very aware of.

I do however believe that stylistic analysis in general and the *style as choice*-perspective in particular can be very useful tools if used carefully and correctly. It is important that we sometimes allow ourselves to shed the notions of “Romanesque” and “Gothic”, and that we cease to speak of stylistic hybrids when we come across something which does not correspond to the stylistic expression we expect. The monuments and works of art which we are dealing with clearly met the requirements of the patrons who ordered them and should be accepted as such.³³²

In the case of the Octagon portal, our knowledge and understanding of its origin is substantially increased by a thorough stylistic analysis of its individual elements and in my opinion, viewing the results of the stylistic analysis in the light of the *style as choice*-perspective, provides additional information about the roles of both patron and workers, about the origins of the appearance of the portal and perhaps also about some of the intentions behind it. Jean Wirth has said that a lot of what we may arrive at using stylistic analysis is not demonstrable, but it will be the most likely hypotheses in order to make the observations about these works make sense.³³³ This is especially true when it comes to the *style as choice-perspective* and this is why it is, in my opinion, such a valuable approach.

13. Conclusion

The Octagon portal consists of two corbel supports carrying a structure of marble shafts sheltered in hollows and capped by foliate and historiated capitals, beneath an inner, foliate arch with two grinning masks and an outer, profiled arch surmounted by a gable with pinnacles. Except for the marble shafts, the portal’s lower half is made of greenschist in combination with soapstone and the upper half is made of soapstone only. Many of the

³³² Draper, *The formation of English Gothic*, 6.

³³³ Wirth, *La datation de la sculpture médiévale*, 220.

portal's architectural elements have been completely or partly restored, particularly the bases and shafts and both sides as well as the capitals on the left side and parts of the foliate arch. The capitals on the right side as well as the grinning masks, most of the profiled arch and the pinnacles are original. The gable was restored in the sixteenth century and still carries the coat of arms of Archbishop Valkendorf, who was responsible for that restoration.

Earlier research has focused mainly on iconography and has not gone into any detailed stylistic analysis. This has resulted in the impression of a slightly eclectic-looking portal which has been difficult to date and the 1180's have in general been thought to be a reasonable dating, mainly because of the dating of the Octagon itself.

Stylistic analysis of the portal's architectural elements shows that the lower part, which includes the corbels, bases, shafts and hollows, must be dated to the 1180's-1190's and seem to be made by workers from a Northern English background, as these elements have features which can be linked stylistically to Yorkshire and Lincoln. The capital sculpture must also be dated to the 1180's-1190's, but here there seems to be a distinct Northern-French influence in the foliage, as well as a Southern-French influence in the "cactus capital" and a combination of English and classicizing Byzantine-inspired traits in the historiated capitals, which indicates English illuminated manuscripts as a source of inspiration. This implies an artist (or artists) with a broad French background, but who was very well acquainted with English art. A break seems to arrive with the abaci of the capitals, which are shaped as a continuous ledge and which show stylistic traits closer to the 1200's. The two grinning masks on the impost stones and the foliate, five-lobed arch can be dated to the 1200's at the earliest. The stylistic evidence for the profiled arch, the gable and pinnacles clearly indicates a dating sometime in the first decades of the thirteenth century, and again with an emphasis on influences from the north of England.

A possible rebuilding of the portal has earlier been suggested, but I find it more likely, based on the stylistic evidence, that stylistic incongruence between the lower and upper parts of the portal must be due to breaks in the construction process, which we know is likely to have occurred.

If the evidence from the stylistic analysis is viewed in the light of the concept of style being a result of active choice, we seem to be able to gain some new information about the roles of the patron versus that of the workers and about the thoughts behind the creation of the Octagon portal. Instead of seeing the portal as stylistically slightly self-contradictory we are now able to see that the background of the workers *in combinaton* with the requirements

of the patron played a great part in the final appearance of the Octagon portal. We also see that the choice of certain stylistic features for the portal may have been based on a sense of what was suitable for a type of edifice like the Octagon – the shrine and tomb of a royal saint. These features, as we see them used on the Octagon portal, express something about the interior of the Octagon and its function, but they also continue to emphasize the place of Trondheim cathedral in the international world of the Church as well as Archbishop Eystein's ambitions for Trondheim to be a major shrine for pilgrimage.

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Abbreviations:

NDR – Nidaros Domkirkes Restaureringsarbeider (Trondheim Cathedral Restoration Workshop)

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